THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING

THE HEAVIES ARE BACK

P. 34

WHO WILL RULE?

THE BATTLE FOR HEAVYWEIGHT SUPREMACY

SERGEY KOVALEV
'KRUSHER' GOING HOME TO FIGHT

MANNY PACQUIAO
AGING ICON HANDLES BRADLEY IN

KEITH THURMAN
TITLEHOLDER CAN'T WAIT TO GET AT

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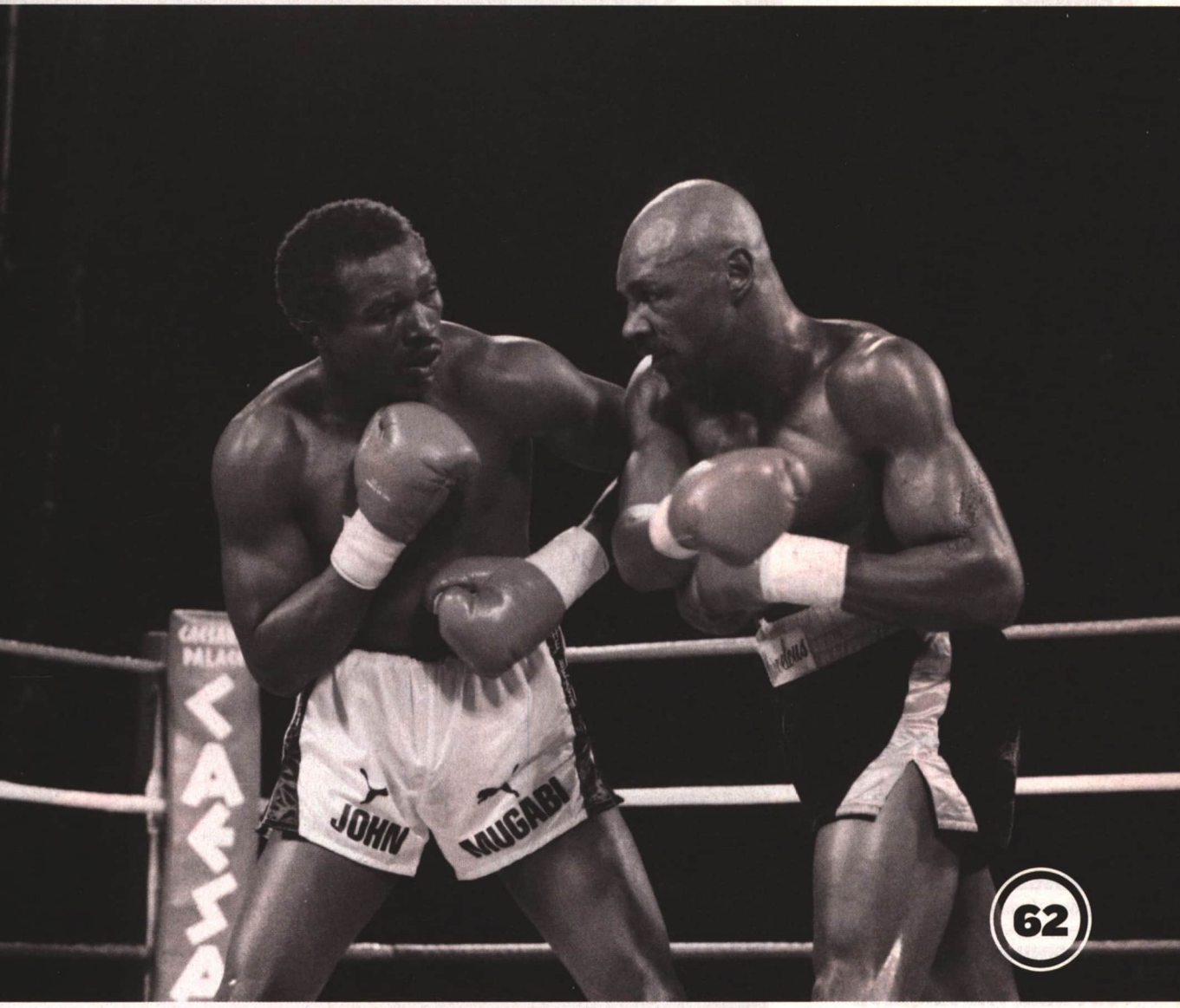

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Showtime has featured countless stars – including Marvin Hagler (right) and John Mugabi – during its 30 years in boxing.

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The RING

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EYES ON THE BIGGEST PRIZE

We shouldn't get too carried away with this heavyweight thing.

This is hardly the 1970s, the Golden Age of the division, when some of the best big men of the past century – Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, et al. – treated fans to one great heavyweight fight after another.

I can say this for the current heavyweight environment, though: It's interesting. That's more than we could've said during the Klitschko brothers' long, dominating run atop the division.

Of course, it started when Tyson Fury upset Wladimir Klitschko to win the RING, IBF, WBA and WBO titles last November.

A moribund weight class sprang to life during 12 hard-to-fathom rounds. The King is dead, long live the … well, we'll see how that plays out. (See our cover story on Page 34.)

As I write this, any of six heavyweights could emerge as the king of the sport's traditional glamour division. Hence the intrigue.

Fury is leading the pack at the moment based on his monumental upset but, because of what seem to be limitations, many doubters wonder how long he will reign. We'll know a lot more on July 9, when he faces Klitschko again in Manchester.

If Fury wins, then there can be no equivocation: The 6-foot-9 Irish Traveller is the No. 1 heavyweight in the world until someone knocks him off.

If Klitschko wins? Then, of course, he would be the man – for now. I don't think we would return to pre-Fury days. His aura of invincibility was removed permanently when he was soundly outboxed by Fury in their first fight.

On top of that, the Ukrainian turned 40 in March. And, unlike most of the past decade, a nasty pack of big, capable heavyweights are champing at the bit to become THE heavyweight and reap the rewards that go with that.

As you read this, you'll probably know the result of the May 21 fight between power-punching WBC titleholder Deontay Wilder and 2004 Olympic champion Alexander Povetkin. The winner of that fight will have climbed into a strong position.

Anthony Joshua, the 2012 Olympic champ, won his first pro title by stopping less-than-worthy IBF titleholder Charles Martin in the second round. Some saw it as Joshua's first significant step toward becoming the near-future standard-bearer in the division.

Indeed, the giant Englishman seems to have it all. Again, though, time will tell.

And, finally, emerging from the shadows is hulking Luis Ortiz. The unbeaten Cuban has a menacing combination of punching power and solid skills, which makes him a threat to anyone.

The point is that any of the fighters mentioned with Klitschko here has the ability – or so it seems – to become his long-term heir. Or it could go another direction. They could end up with mixed results against one another, meaning we could see champions rotate in and out on a regular basis.

The whole thing is fascinating. Now we just sit back and enjoy.

Jesus Soto Karass (left) and Yoshihiro Kamegai gave 100 percent of themselves in an April 15 war in Los Angeles.

HAOKI FUKUDA

Gennady Golovkin (right) made Dominic Wade his 22nd consecutive knockout victim on April 23 in Inglewood, California.

NAOKI FUKUDA

LET'S NOT FORGET

I'm really upset by the failure of the boxing community and RING Magazine to analyze the fight that caused Prichard Colon to be put in a coma (vs. Terrel Williams last October in Fairfax, Virginia). The ref in that fight (Joseph Cooper) should've been made aware of his mistakes and sent to a refresher on safety. I believe the rabbit punches in that fight were blatant and vicious. Referees are the last line of safety and shouldn't be afraid to act upon such infractions. And, yes, Colon's corner played a big part too. This fight should be watched over and over again, analyzed and put in perspective to prevent it from happening to others but it seems as if nobody cares.

Wilfred Rivera

Editor's Note: On April 15 the WBC created the "Prichard Colon rule" solely to address the problem of excessive rabbit punching by providing new guidelines and requirements for referees. The extent to which it will implemented remains to be seen. The rule can be viewed at http://bit.do/wbc-colon.

TRUE FIGHTERS

My wife and I were on vacation in Tokyo last March. While there I had the pleasure of visiting the Teiken Gym and watching some of the best fighters in the country train, one of them being Yoshihiro Kamegai. He might not be the fastest or the strongest but damn that man can fight! Same goes for Jesus Soto Karass. I'd be hard pressed to think of the last time I've seen either of them in a boring fight. Last night I watched their match that ended in a draw and all I can say is "wow." These guys aren't getting paychecks nearly as big as Manny Pacquiao or Miguel Cotto but they came to fight regardless. So thank you Kamegai and Soto Karass for that stunning performance. Those are the fights that deserve PPV status. Hopefully there's a rematch in the near future.

Davis Clouse
Omaha, Neb.

SONNY WAS NO COWARD

I just finished writing a book-length manuscript titled "The Big Bear," which covers the life and times of the great heavyweight champion Charles L. "Sonny" Liston. In my research, I found that Dr. Alexander Robbins, the ring physician for the first title fight between Liston and Clay (soon to be named Muhammad Ali) did an X-ray on Liston's shoulder and found that it was in fact injured to the point that made it impossible for him to further defend himself in that bout, in which Liston did not come out for Round 7. I greatly dislike it when lay people say that Sonny Boy quit on his stool, insinuating that Mr. Liston was a coward. Liston, in fact, had all the courage in the world and had it been physically possible for him to come out for that Round 7 he most certainly would have done so. Let us not forget that the fight was even on the scorecards leading up to that seventh round. Yes, there is a good chance that had Sonny Boy not injured his shoulder, he might have won that fight!

Robert W. Burton
Santa Clarita, California

END THE STRIPPING

I am a lifelong reader of THE RING Magazine, and have always looked at your champions as the true champions of their divisions. However, recently you've been stripping linear champions of their titles for not fighting a Top 5 contender in two years. Whilst I see your logic, I believe that taking this course of action will ultimately hurt boxing and muddy the waters even further.

History is littered with examples of great champions that THE RING would've stripped under this policy. Larry Holmes didn't fight a Top 5 contender between Gerry Cooney in 1982 and David Bey in 1985. Fighters like Tim Witherspoon did crack the Top 5 AFTER their losses to Holmes, but in the build-up Witherspoon was nowhere it. In many cases we don't know how good a fighter is until he takes a massive jump in class.

Any great fighter can be a great champion on any given night and everyone loves a Cinderella story, but what you are doing is inadvertently robbing fighters of their shot at the big time. In the long run I can't see how constantly encouraging Top 5 boxers to engage in box-offs is helping the sport which I love. It's almost like football here in England, where the top teams want a premier league with fewer teams. Likewise, politics still exist in boxing and I believe there are many great fighters that aren't getting their dues. If you feel a RING champion is avoiding top contenders, name and shame them but please, please, please don't strip them.

Gareth Rodd
Plymouth, England

CORRECTIONS

In separate articles in the May 2016 issue, THE RING had the wrong round in which Manny Pacquiao stopped Ricky Hatton and the date on which Tim Bradley fought Brandon Rios. Pacquiao KO'd Hatton in Round 2; the latter fight took place on Nov. 7. Also, in the July 2016 issue, we had the wrong result of the Juan Carlos Payano-Rau'shee Warren fight on Aug. 2. Payano defeated Warren by a split decision.

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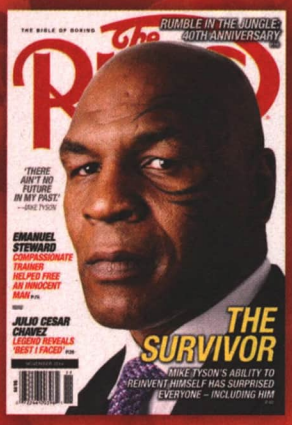

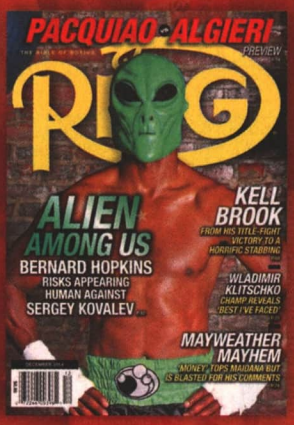

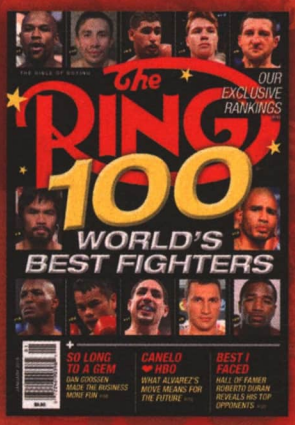

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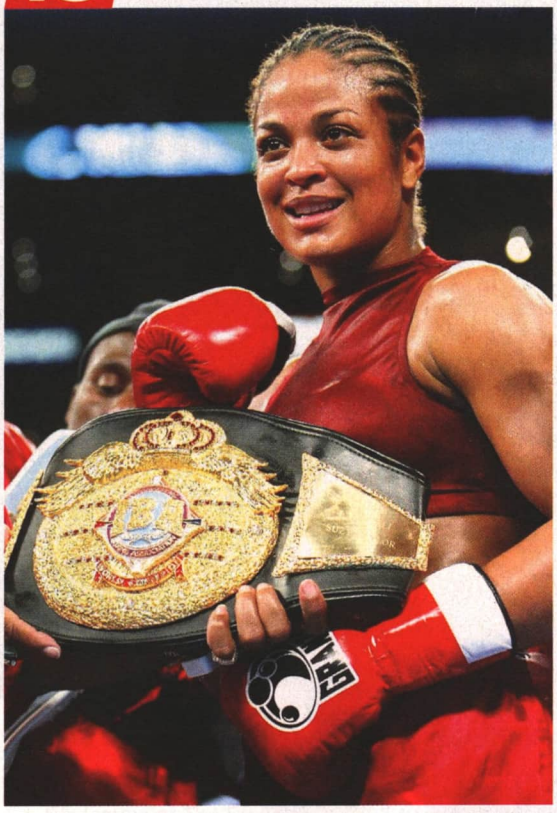
Floyd Patterson (right) and Anthony Joshua (below) have something significant in common.

ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, Advanced Degrees contributor Gregg Morgan connects the first Olympic champion to win the heavyweight title – Floyd Patterson – with the most recent to do so – Anthony Joshua – in only five steps. Patterson, who won the middleweight gold medal, last fought in 1972. Here's a look.

Floyd Patterson fought
Muhammad Ali, who fought
George Foreman, who fought
Shannon Briggs, who fought
Raphael Zumbano Love, who fought
Anthony Joshua »

10 A MONTHLY BOXING LIST



This month: Many relatives of famous boxers have also stepped into the ring. That includes women. Here are 10 with familiar last names (in alphabetical order).

« **1. LAILA ALI** (Muhammad Ali, daughter)

2. TRACY BYRD (Chris Byrd, sister)

3. TYRIESHIA DOUGLAS (Antoine Douglas, sister)

4. IRICHELLE DURAN (Roberto Duran, daughter)

5. FREEDA FOREMAN (George Foreman, daughter)

6. JACQUI FRAZIER-LYDE (Joe Frazier, daughter)

7. MARIA JOHANSSON (Ingemar Johansson, daughter)

8. EDITH SOLEDAD MATTHYSSE (Lucas Matthysse, sister)

9. J'MARIE MOORE (Archie Moore, daughter)

10. ELIZA OLSON (Bobo Olson, granddaughter)

FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

1. ADRIAN ESTRELLA LIGHTWEIGHT CONTENDER / **2. JOSE PEDRAZA** IBF JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER / **3. SHINSUKE YAMANAKA** WBC BANTAMWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER

FIGHTER	MUSIC	CAR	FOOD	TATTOOS	ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING	MOVIE	VIDEO GAME
1.	"I love Mexican music like Banda el Recodo. I also like electronic music, like Avicii, Calvin Harris. I like pop and jazz."	"I drive a Jeep Cherokee; it's a present my father gave me on my 16th birthday. I love it. If I could have any car, I would like a better Jeep, a Lamborghini, Ferrari or a Mustang."	"Pizza, pasta, Mexican food. I'm a seafood person."	"I had a couple of small ones when I was a kid but now I'm trying to lead a better life."	"(Former soccer player) Cuauhtemoc Blanco is one of my favorites; he is someone who made it from a hard neighborhood in Mexico."	"'Titanic,' I loved it. 'Butterfly Effect' and **'The Godfather.'** They are my three favorites."	"I don't play too much but when I was a kid I loved sports games."
2.	"All music but the best to me is **'Balada.'**"	"The Toyota is an economical and good car." "An **Audi Q7**. I don't drive."	"I love pasta and red beef."	"I like tattoos but not on myself. I like to see them on others."	"**Javier Culson**, 400-meter hurdles runner."	"'Lion King,' superhero movies and anime movies."	"'Call of Duty' and 'Destiny.'"
3.	"Japanese pop."		"Food is my favorite hobby. Curry, pasta, everything; I cannot decide."	"No tattoos."	"I like local baseball players."	"I like many Japanese movies."	"Cell phone games."

— **Anson Wainwright**

THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH By Michael Rosenthal

GOOD

This item could be filed under both good and bad. The good is obvious when you're discussing Gennady Golovkin, the affable Kazakhstani who has knocked out 22 consecutive opponents to the delight of a growing legion of fans. I'm not sure there's a more exciting fighter in the world than Triple-G. We should appreciate him while he's at his peak; remember, that part of every great fighter's career is fleeting. One day they're lifting us out of our seats, the next they're gone. That leads me to the unfortunate aspect of Golovkin's career. He turned 34 on April 8. Most fighters of his ilk have had a number of important fights under their belts by that age. Triple-G has had none. That's not his fault. No one near his weight is eager to tangle with him for obvious reasons. Plus, there simply aren't many – if any – prospective opponents at the moment who would be a legitimate threat to him. That's why fans are hanging their hats on Canelo Alvarez, the only true star in a realistic position to fight Golovkin. And it almost certainly will happen – either this fall or next spring – because of the money on the table. Beyond that? Who knows? I'm going to be optimistic. I figure Golovkin has three, maybe four good years left, which translates to as many as a dozen fights. That's plenty of time for worthy opponents to emerge. For now, I'm going to enjoy the show regardless of the opponent. And the real challenges will come.

BAD

Members of the media and fans are quick to chastise a judge who does a poor job scoring in a major fight. And rightfully so. We must hold judges to high standards to maintain the integrity of the sport. That said, things aren't always as they seem to be. Take 85-year-old Lloyd Scaife, the judge who managed to score the lopsided Luis Ortiz-Tony Thompson fight only 48-47 for Ortiz before Ortiz stopped Thompson in the sixth round in Washington D.C. That included a 10-9 score for Ortiz in the first round even though the Cuban knocked Thompson down. Clearly, something was wrong. Some people cried corruption. Others cited incompetence. Turns out it was neither. Scaife acknowledged in a fine column on BoxingScene.com by RING contributor David Greisman that, "I might be feeling a little senility or something coming on." Scaife said he was told by a woman who lives with him that it took him almost an hour to tie his tie before he left for the fight when it once took him only a few minutes. And he said after the Ortiz-Thompson fight that he didn't remember giving Thompson a single round until the chief judge told him so. "I didn't know what to say," he told Greisman. Scaife, who judged fights off and on for more than 30 years in the D.C. area, retired from a sport he loved amid the fallout from Ortiz-Thompson. I have no vitriol for him now. I just want to congratulate him on a good career.

WORSE

I don't want to be too hard on Charles Martin, who most of us had barely heard of as recently as this past January, but his brief run as a heavyweight "champion" is deserving of scorn. First, the heavyweight title (the IBF version) for which he fought in January should never have been vacant. Tyson Fury took it from Wladimir Klitschko fair and square less than two months earlier. Second, Martin won the vacant title by a fluke: Opponent Vyacheslav Glazkov had to retire with an injured knee. And, third, his first title defense – against 2012 Olympic champion Anthony Joshua on April 9 – was, well, embarrassing. The fact Martin was taken out in the second round by two powerful rights from a big puncher is nothing to be ashamed of. The problem was that Martin didn't look as if he even belonged in the ring. He was stationary, ridiculously easy to hit and lacked even minimal composure. In his final moments as "champion," while he sat on the canvas, he seemed to lose track of the count and was counted out. An ugly end to an ugly reign. I don't want to think that Martin traveled to London simply for the payday – seven figures, according to numerous reports – but it looked that way. For his sake, I hope Martin comes back. I hope he gets another opportunity to fight on a big stage and does better. Couldn't get much worse.

RING POLL

A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS

The heavyweight division was blown wide open when Tyson Fury upset Wladimir Klitschko. With that in mind, we asked: **Which heavyweight will ultimately emerge as No. 1 in the division?** Here is how you responded. (The poll was posted before the Anthony Joshua-Charles Martin and Deontay Wilder-Alexander Povetkin fights.)

THE PERCENTAGES:

40.91	ANTHONY JOSHUA	**2.24**	JOSEPH PARKER
18.93	DEONTAY WILDER	**2.05**	OTHER
14.59	TYSON FURY	**1.81**	ALEXANDER POVETKIN
10.96	LUIS ORTIZ	**0.72**	CHARLES MARTIN
7.78	WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO	**NOTE:**	16,872 READERS VOTED

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

56-7-1 (40 KOs)

Juan Manuel Marquez said Manny Pacquiao – not Floyd Mayweather Jr. – is the best he has faced.

It took Juan Manuel Marquez 10 years to win a world title but once he did he didn't stop, going on to win a total of eight major titles in four weight classes. He is one of only three Mexicans to win belts in four divisions.

The Mexico City-born boxer often fought in the shadows of high-profile countrymen Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, whose all-action styles were more appealing to Mexican fans.

And, if strong rumors were true, many top fighters in and around Marquez's weight class wanted nothing to do with him because of his obvious ability. Naseem Hamed was said to be one of those fighters.

However, eventually, Marquez became impossible to avoid because of his success, evolved into a more entertaining fighter and built a career that will eventually take him to the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

"Dinamita" lost his 1993 debut by disqualification but won his next 29 fights to earn a shot at unbeaten WBA featherweight titleholder Freddie Norwood in September 1999. The challenger dropped a unanimous decision that many believed he deserved to win.

Undeterred, Marquez set about earning a second title shot. He won his next 10 fights (nine by knockout) to land a fight with

CHRIS COZZONE

old warhorse Manuel Medina for the vacant IBF crown in February 2003. Marquez won this time, stopping his countryman in seven rounds.

Marquez considers it his proudest moment.

"I had my first chance when I was 26 but, simply, the judges denied me the opportunity," Marquez told THE RING. "Four years later I won my first world championship, defeating 'Mantecas' Medina. That was such a great moment."

On the flip side, it was the four-fight series with Manny Pacquiao, beginning in May 2004, that would cause so much frustration for Marquez. It got off to a horrible start as he went down three times in the first round of the first fight. The Mexican master worked his way back into the contest but had to settle for a draw after 12 hard-fought rounds.

Marquez and Pacquiao couldn't come to terms on an immediate rematch so the Mexican went another direction that included the surprising decision to go to Indonesia, where he lost a 12-round decision to the talented Chris John.

Once again he had to work his way back into the mix. In 2007, he won a world title in a second weight class by outboxing Barrera.

Pacquiao eked out a razor-thin split decision in their second fight and three years would pass before number three. In the meantime, Marquez picked up the RING lightweight championship against Joel Casamayor and won two more titles with a hard-fought stoppage over Juan Diaz.

Then came the most one-sided setback of his career. When Floyd Mayweather Jr. ended his first retirement, he chose the smaller Marquez as his opponent. Mayweather won by a near-shutout decision. Curiously, although Marquez was pressed by THE RING, he didn't pick Mayweather in any of the 10 categories here.

Marquez lost a majority decision in the third fight against Pacquiao even though some observers thought he did enough to win. But in the fall of 2012, when Marquez met Pacquiao for the fourth time, there were no questions. In the final seconds of the sixth round, while behind on the scorecards, Marquez landed a picture-perfect right cross that knocked Pacquiao out cold.

"I believe that all my fights were important to conquer four different divisions," he proudly proclaimed. (Marquez gained an interim 140-pound title against Sergey Fedchenko between the third and fourth Pacquiao fights and was later upgraded to full status.) "But if I had to choose one, I choose the last fight with Manny due to how it ended."

Marquez (56-7-1, 40 knockouts) last fought two years ago, outpointing Mike Alvarado at the Forum in Inglewood, California, where he made a name for himself in the mid-1990s. However, he has said he hopes to return to the ring this summer. Now 42, he lives in Mexico City with his wife Erika and three children. He keeps busy with several activities, including dabbling in the real estate business.

"I would like to teach boxing to the youth, making a difference with my promotion enterprise," he said. "The Mexican Boxing Federation offered me (the opportunity) to participate in a great project. I believe I would be able to do great things."

Marquez agreed to speak about the best fighters he fought in 10 categories.

BEST JAB

Marco Antonio Barrera: When you want to dodge a jab using speed, you must calculate it. That is what I did with him. I tried to guess where his punches were going and then counterpunch and decrease their accuracy.

BEST CHIN

Manny Pacquiao: He took a good shot and he always returned stronger.

FASTEST HANDS

Pacquiao: He has a lot of power and speed.

FASTEST FEET

Pacquiao: He is always everywhere. He is a tough fighter.

SMARTEST

Sergey Fedchenko: The Ukrainian fighter, no one knew him. He had a great counterpunching (style), speed and a great jab. He was very intelligent also. Manuel "Mantecas" Medina was also very smart.

STRONGEST

Pacquiao: When he fought, he moved his hips a lot. Then I analyzed that all his power came from there, in the hips. I understood that he couldn't do his power moves and he would have problems if I used speed so I started fighting different.

BEST PUNCHER

Pacquiao: In all the fights I had, nobody hit me harder than him.

BEST DEFENSE

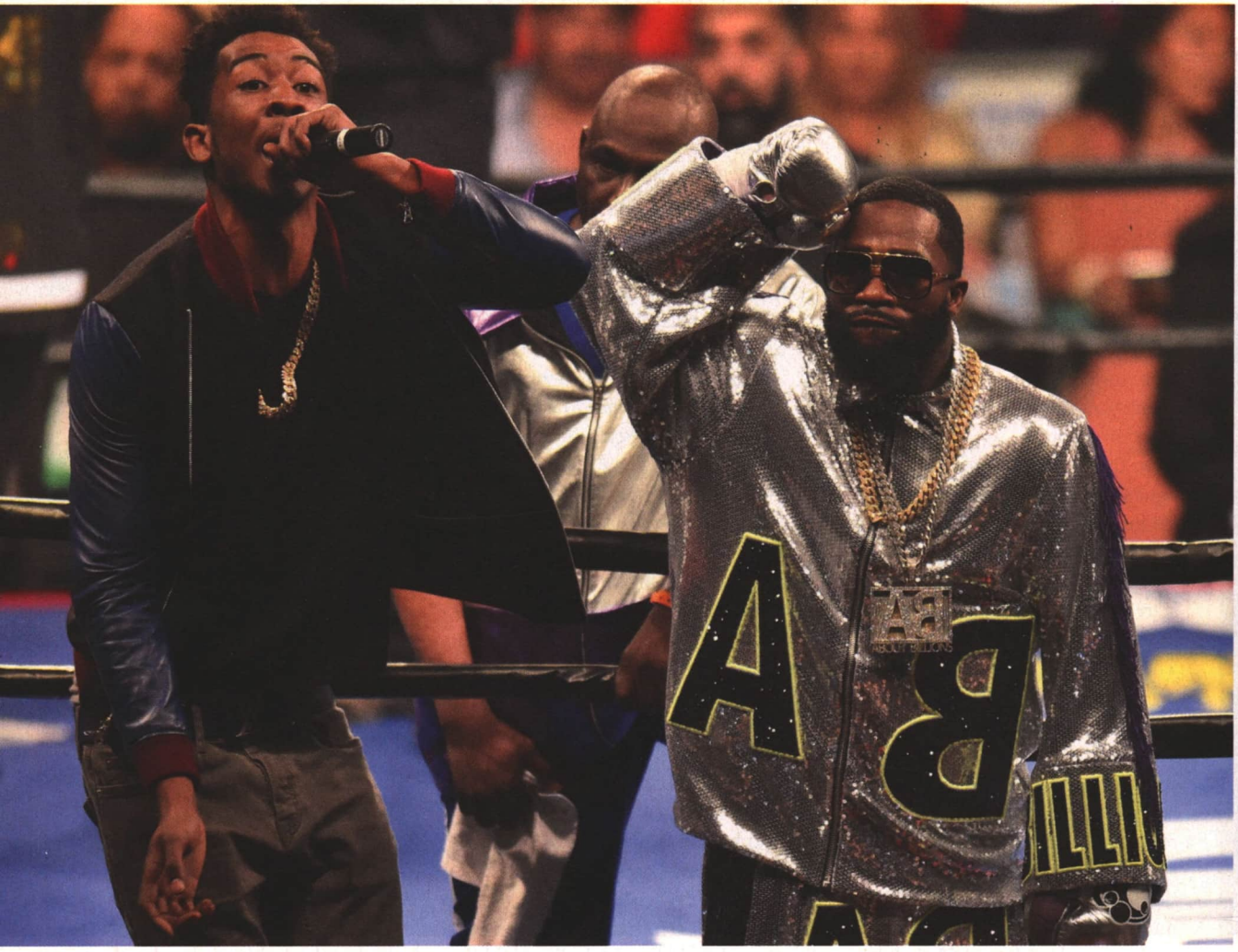
Pacquiao: He is great at closing his defense, he has a good guard and it is very hard to land (a clean punch). After four fights with him, I was able to know him better. I also learned his mistakes. Fedchenko also had great defense.

BEST SKILLS

Juan Diaz: Juan has a lot of speed. He was aggressive and elusive. On the other hand, Joel (Casamayor) was great with the distance and he was a brilliant fighter.

BEST OVERALL

Pacquiao: Without doubt, the best pound-for-pound of his time and I faced him at his best.



Adrien Broner's misdeeds outside the ring are starting to pile up.

NAOKI FUKUDA

Self Destruction

PERHAPS **ADRIEN BRONER** NEEDS SOME JAIL TIME TO WAKE UP

Adrien Broner has been spoiled rotten – and that's not just a turn of phrase.

Some may think his power has gone to his head. A fighter who becomes that way might consider himself untouchable or invincible. Broner's money and influence have made him care too little for consequences. He can do what he wants, when he wants and how he wants.

He can skip out on media obligations that would help make his fights a financial success. He can fail to make weight. And he can fight on despite an open warrant for his arrest stemming from serious allegations.

All of this happens because his trainers, managers, promoter and networks still want to make money with him. He is indeed talented, a boxer who has won world titles in four weight classes in four and a half years. He is indeed popular, drawing good ratings on television and good crowds in arenas.

He makes money because of his talent and popularity – and in spite of his extracurricular activities.

On a Friday in April in Washington, D.C., he beat Ashley Theophane by technical knockout. The next Monday in Cincinnati, he finally turned himself in to police. Both involved the same action in different

circumstances: beating up someone who was clearly outgunned.

This isn't just about his antics and attention-grabbing escapades. No one is harmed when he's uploading videos of himself flushing money down toilets or throwing it out of a moving car or tossing bills and change onto the ground after shopping at a Walmart.

The buck stops with him, however, when it comes to the allegations levied against him this time around. Broner was accused of confronting an acquaintance after losing money to him while betting on bowling, pulling a handgun and punching the man out. He was already on probation for driving under the influence of alcohol.

He came in 0.4 pounds overweight for the Theophane fight and refused to try to make it the rest of the way down to 140. He said he had outgrown the division and would be moving up. More likely his body gets as overinflated between fights as his ego.

No one sidelined him when the robbery charges were made public. Few other employers would allow someone to work and represent them. Broner still got paid. He reportedly gave Theophane $50,000 for the fight to go forward, a sum that is four times as much as the money he lost from the bowling bets.

Money is not the root of all evil but money has enabled Broner. We want fighters to be able to bounce back from losses yet he hasn't learned from the embarrassment that was his defeat against Marcos Maidana and the disappointment that was his performance against Shawn Porter. He took the easy road back. To this day, Broner's biggest win is arguably over the past-his-prime Paulie Malignaggi.

That's not to say Broner hasn't worked hard to get to where he is. His truly is a rags-to-riches story. He wouldn't succeed without what skill and ability he has. We just expected better – and not just in the ring.

This, after all, is the same young man who wanted to avoid the cautionary tale of fellow Cincinnati fighter Ricardo Williams Jr., who went from inside the ropes to behind bars. Broner wanted to take after Floyd Mayweather Jr. but has merely taken some of the personality traits and much of the propensity for marketing himself as an antihero to some and an antagonist to others.

Those close to Adrien Broner say that he has a quiet, respectful side that people don't see. He will claim that he's the kind of person who would give the shirt off his back to help others. He will complain, as Mayweather has, that no one reports his good deeds. Of course, they don't do as much themselves to publicize their good deeds as they do their more polarizing behavior.

His actions speak louder anyway, actions that demonstrate just how few repercussions he's faced. Perhaps the only way for him to learn that hard lesson is for him to do hard time.

★

Unlike his namesake, "Prince" Charles Martin was never going to be king. There will be no royal succession for him. There would need to be success for that to happen.

Instead, his brief reign ended with royal pain. His crowning achievement was holding a heavyweight world title for less than three months and less than two rounds. He was dethroned in his first defense, losing to Anthony Joshua in 4½ minutes.

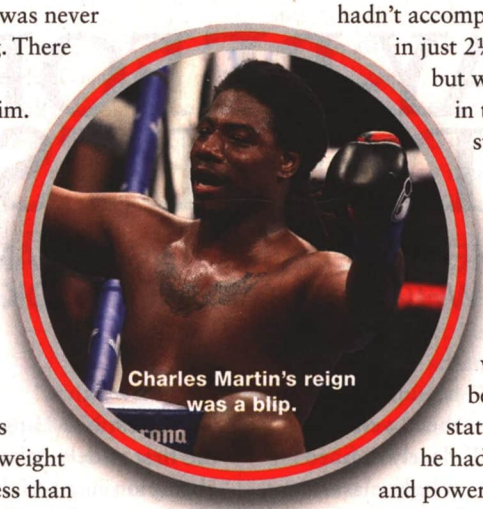
Martin barely had a chance to put up his dukes. He was too slow physically and he was also too slow to realize that Joshua was countering every time Martin came forward with a jab. Martin walked into it and Joshua was able to leave with a walkover victory.

That was no surprise. Most would've been hard-pressed to find a significant name on Martin's ledger before he fought for a world title. He was a prospect who hadn't really earned his way into being a contender and then suddenly he was a titleholder.

He was fortunate that his title fight came against Vyacheslav Glazkov, who didn't exactly strike fear into the hearts of the heavyweight division and was best known for a dreary, disputed decision over Steve Cunningham and a fortunate draw against Malik Scott. Martin and Glazkov fought in January for a vacant belt that was stripped from Tyson Fury.

Martin was also fortunate that Glazkov suffered a bad knee injury during the third round of their fight and was unable to continue. Martin won a world title without landing much of significance. And he lost his world title in April in much the same way.

Joshua was the favorite. He, too, hadn't accomplished too much in just 2½ years as a pro but what he'd done in that time was still more than what Martin had done in four. Joshua also was an Olympic gold medalist with substance beyond his statuesque build – he had height, speed and power.


Charles Martin's reign was a blip.

The arena in London sold out quickly for Joshua's coronation. They soon cheered loudly in celebration. Martin's time with the title came crashing down like a house of cards. Martin hit the deck twice. He fancied himself a prince who would be king. Against Joshua's hands, however, he was made to look like a jester.

DAY-BEFORE DOUBTS

IT'S TIME FOR BOXING TO GIVE SAME-DAY WEIGH-INS ANOTHER LOOK

Day-before weigh-ins (like this one with Shawn Porter) are now used to help promote the fight.

Once upon a time, there were no clearly defined weight classes in boxing. Combatants who were referred to as "lightweights" entertained crowds prior to some championship bouts. But fighters of average size weren't taken seriously until the early 1800s, when English fighters weighing 154 pounds or less became known as "middleweights."

In 1853, Nat Langham became the first widely acknowledged champion in a weight division below heavyweight when he knocked out Tom Sayers in a middleweight title bout that lasted 61 rounds. Then, in 1909, the London-based National Sporting Club established the eight weight classes that remained the backbone of championship boxing for the better part of a century: heavyweight, light heavyweight, middleweight, welterweight, lightweight, featherweight, bantamweight and flyweight.

Boxing now has 17 weight divisions. The primary rationale for this proliferation is that fighters should not be forced to choose between dehydrating to make weight and facing opponents who are significantly heavier than they are. But that rationale has been undermined by day-before weigh-ins, which have increased the practice of "drying out" and, in some instances, increased the disparity in fight-night weight.

Traditionally, fighters weighed in on the day of a fight – sometimes

NAOKI FUKUDA

in the ring immediately before they fought. Day-before weigh-ins were instituted to accommodate the desire of promoters for television sound-bites that helped market fights. For megafights, the weigh-in is now an attraction in and of itself.

This gives rise to two issues. The first is the health and safety of the fighter. The second is how day-before weigh-ins affect the competitive balance of fights.

The medical rationale for early weigh-ins is that it's dangerous for a fighter to compete in a dehydrated state where his body is deprived of fluid and essential minerals and that a fighter needs at least 24 hours to recover from drying out. But gaining 16 pounds in a day isn't so healthy either.

And while a fighter who dries out for a weigh-in 30 hours before a fight has time to recover, early weigh-ins are unfair to fighters who can make weight on the day of a fight. In many instances, they force fighters who might otherwise legitimately make weight to dry out and drop down a division in order to face comparably sized adversaries.

Let's look at the situation in reverse. No one would suggest that jockeys in the Kentucky Derby be allowed to weigh-in 30 hours before the race and then dry out to lessen their horse's load. Yet in principle, that's what boxing allows today.

Tradition alone isn't a valid reason to return to same-day weigh-ins any more than it's a valid reason to return to 15-round title fights. But boxing needs a serious study of the issue from a medical and competitive point of view. And one state can't do it alone because if one state bans same-day weigh-ins, it would lose big fights to other jurisdictions.

Let's start by gathering a statistical base. The Association of Boxing Commissions should ask its member commissions to weigh all fighters in the dressing room before they fight. Then its medical committee should evaluate the data with an eye toward fighter safety and competitive balance.

★

SOME THOUGHTS ON BOXING

Carlo Rotella: "Boxing is brutal and corrupt, which is part of what makes it worth writing about."

Carlos Acevedo: "Boxing is the most serious of all sports; a sport where participants actively forge their own destinies from moment to moment."

Hamilton Nolan: "Boxing, unlike a job that involves spending hours wasting time on the internet each day, is unforgiving of even the smallest amount of slacking."

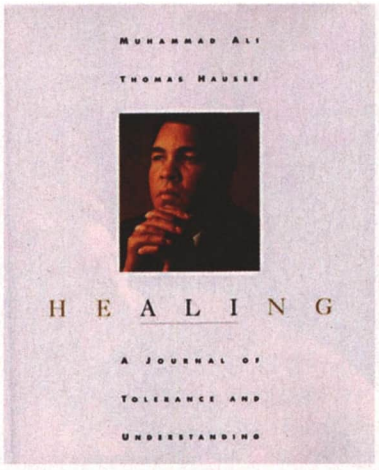
Matt Wells: "Boxing is a tough sport to wrap your head around. A fighter has to maintain a certain level of aggression without letting it get out of control."

Robert Ecksel: "Boxing is all things to all people. For some of us, for the exceptionally delusional, it's the noble art, the sweet science, the sport of sports, the gentlemanly art of self defense, and the fight game. For others, perhaps more discerning or less, it's just two guys punching each other in the face."

★

Over the years, I've written extensively about moments shared with Muhammad Ali. This is about one that didn't happen.

In 1996, Ali and I co-authored a short book about bigotry and prejudice entitled "HEALING." Then, to spread the message, we visited a half dozen schools across the country, talking with students about the need for tolerance and understanding. In February 1997, our journey brought us to Boston.



Thomas Hauser wrote "Healing" with Muhammad Ali but never got to write "The Greatest Meets the Greatest."

Muhammad loves bread pudding. It was No. 1 on his list of culinary pleasures. And Julia Child – perhaps the most famous chef ever – lived in Cambridge, which is in the Boston metropolitan area.

Child was a personality in her own right, 84 years old at the time with numerous books and television shows to her credit. More than anyone else, she had popularized French cuisine in America.

I'd always wanted to meet her. And as it turned out, she thought it would be fun to meet Ali. Thus, an idea was born. The most celebrated chef in America would invite Ali to her home for homemade bread pudding. And I'd write about it.

Alas, as Robert Burns once wrote, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley."

Child was called to San Francisco at the last minute. The bread pudding festival never happened. And I never got to write "The Greatest Meets the Greatest." RING

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book - "A Hurting Sport: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing" – was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

The fate of Magomed Abdusalamov (right) is a reminder of how dangerous boxing can be.

Everyone Knows The Risks

BOXERS ACKNOWLEDGE AND WILLINGLY FACE THE INHERENT DANGERS OF THEIR SPORT

This is one in a series of columns by future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins, who – through contributor Joseph Santoliquito – gives us his thoughts on various subjects important to every boxer and fan. This issue: **the inherent dangers of boxing.**

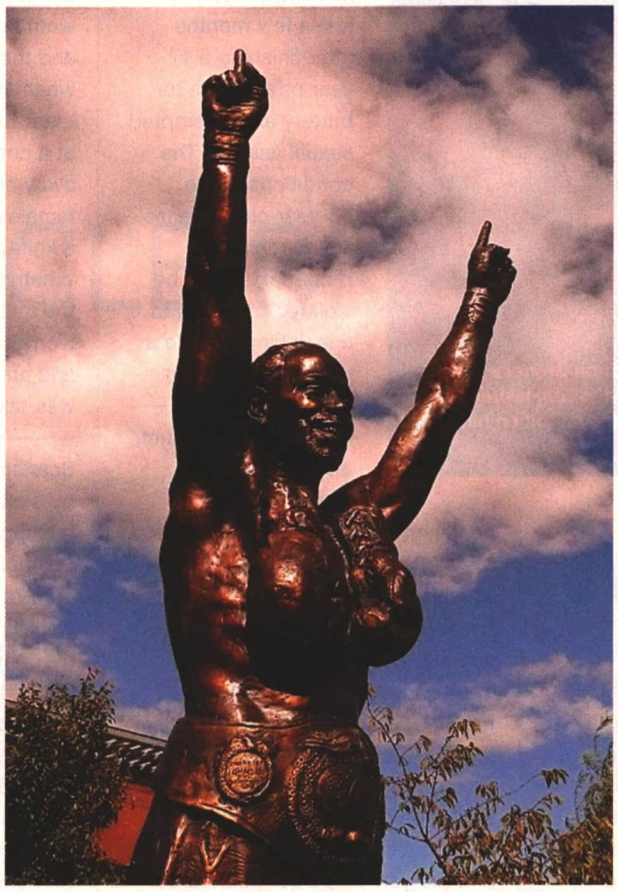
Boxing is a hurting business and anyone who puts gloves on, especially those who do it for a living, understands the risks involved. Still, no one wants to see anyone carried out of the ring on a stretcher unconscious.

You understand that when you step into the ring you better be 100 percent prepared and maximize as much of your talent as you can. The same is true no matter what level you're at in boxing.

All fighters sign up for this. Fighters know there is a chance that every time you step into that ring, you may come out in a coma. And even if you come out of the coma, you may never be the same again. How fighters combat that is ignoring it and fighting to win. No fighter, and again I don't care what level it is, thinks that they're going to lose. Every fighter has the same mentality: They're going to win the fight. We believe so. The last thing that you are thinking about is the risk that you take. No one ever steps into the ring thinking about getting hurt.

You have a better chance of being shot on some Philadelphia street than you do getting seriously hurt in the ring. I mean that. You get punched in the stomach, punched in the arms, punched in the head – that hurts. But to get severely hurt ... there is a very small percentage of fighters who die in there. What I've found in my career is that rewards are worth the risks.

I was there the night (the late) Leavander Johnson fought Jesus Chavez in Las Vegas in September 2005. I'm never going to forget it. Golden Boy promoted that fight and



Bernard Hopkins said he was saddened but not shaken by the death of Leavander Johnson, whose likeness graces Center City Park in Atlantic City.

I remember going with Oscar De La Hoya to the emergency room where Leavander went into a coma. What can you say or do but be there to support the family?

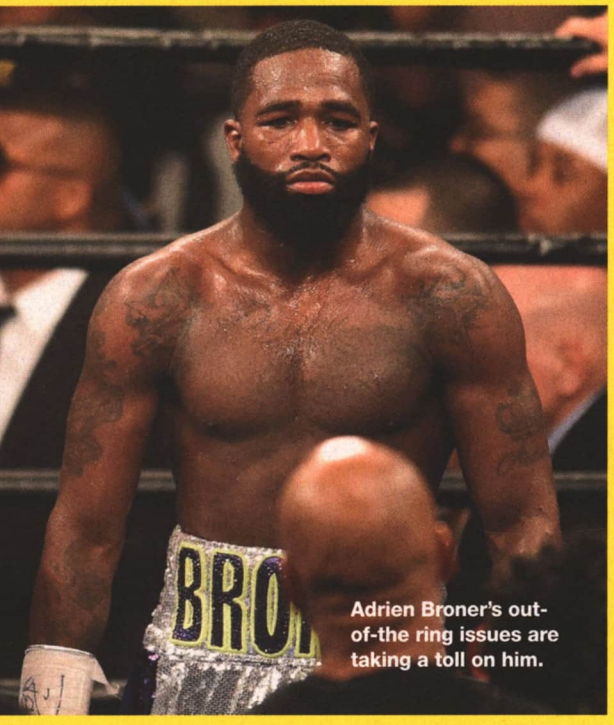
What I took from that was to fight harder for what I wanted and for my respect. I felt bad for Leavander and his family but I didn't get scared. I wasn't shaken. The reality kicked in like I'm a police officer about to go out into the street. You kiss your wife and your baby and there's a chance that you'll never come back home the same way you left. I'm not saying I have the same job as a police officer. But I can relate to the fact that I may never come home again the way I left.

This is a serious business. We're not asking for the people or the fans watching to feel sorry for us. It's what we choose to do. But I would like fans to be a little sensitive in realizing the job at the office desk sipping your coffee and eating your doughnuts is not comparable to going into that ring and getting your brains splattered inside your skull.

As crazy as this sounds, I know that there are some people out there that want to see you get badly beat. I know some even wanted to see me badly hurt; the same with Floyd Mayweather. That keeps your edge. It forces you to always be sharp in and out of the ring. But I never go into the ring thinking I can get hurt. I go into the ring thinking I better not get hit with that right hand.

Fighters are different people. We really are. I'm at a content stage in my life. It's why I keep it real with kids, older guys and everyone in the middle that fights, that there are no guarantees they're going to win a belt or be a legend or world champion. What is guaranteed is that every time you play with this business, you can get hurt.

Boxing is not golf or any other sport. You can't finish this and look like you just got done modeling. This is the only sport where the winner can even look like he lost. We know the risks involved and accept them.


Adrien Broner's out-of-the ring issues are taking a toll on him.

CRIME WAVE

It's a special all-crime edition of OTR this month, so grab your favorite contraband and let's get started!

The gold handcuffs go to **Adrien Broner** and the arrest warrant issued for his balls-in-the-gutter night at a Cincinnati bowling alley in January, which you can read more about on Page 18. Even while in Ohio to turn himself in for that alleged episode, though, he was arrested for reckless driving – a violation of his probation from a 2015 drunk-driving case – and was sent to jail for 10 days.

Not to fear, all you Broner supporters (... crickets chirping ...), the double grill-wearing kingpin told TMZ after his release on April 22 that he was kept company on the inside by plenty of fan mail. He claimed some people even sent money, which sounds a little like mailing heroin to a rehab facility. He said he gave it to the other inmates.

As for the assault and robbery charges related to the bowling incident, Broner was indicted on April 14 but no date was set for a pre-trial hearing at press time.

Former heavyweight star **Ike Ibeabuchi** was arrested in Arizona in April, just a few months after finishing a 17-year prison term for battery and attempted sexual assault. The conditions of the 43-year-old's release included lifetime probation, which he violated by failing to check himself in to a treatment program.

After a brief manhunt, **Josh Luteran** was arrested at a hostel on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and charged with felony assault of his girlfriend, who had to be placed in a medically-induced coma as a result of her injuries on April 12. A lawyer representing the 30-year-old middleweight and part-time actor, who was already on an express train to the Lower East Side of Palookaville following knockout losses to **Daniel Jacobs** and **Ievgen Khytrov**, pointed out injuries (including bite marks) on his client and claimed it was a case of self defense.

In Omaha, Nebraska, junior welterweight titleholder **Terence Crawford** used his knowledge of hydraulic lifts to rescue his '84 Monte Carlo from the confines of an unscrupulous auto shop. Or, if you prefer the shop owner's version, Crawford and three friends forcibly removed the car, which was being held because the boxer hadn't paid for a paint job, and caused $5,000 worth of damage to the lift before dragging the car away with a rope. Crawford turned himself in to police and was cited for four misdemeanors and given a May court date.

Former titleholder **Paul Spadafora** outdid everyone by landing charges from two separate incidents in two separate locations *on the same day.* At a bar outside Philadelphia on the afternoon of April 4, Spadafora allegedly drank a 63-year-old woman's beer, put her in a headlock and then threw her to the ground when she went outside to call 911. Later that night he allegedly arrived at a convenience store several miles away and yelled incoherently at a female employee while brandishing a knife and a blueberry muffin. Whether it was the yelling, the knife, the muffin or some combination that worried her, the woman called police and an alcohol-reeking Spadafora was taken into custody.

Scarier even than being assaulted by a man with a blueberry muffin is the supposed plot uncovered in the Philippines in late April. Two days after radical Islamic militant group Abu Sayyaf claimed responsibility for beheading a Canadian citizen, Philippines president **Benigno Aquino** made this shocking statement regarding the group: "They allegedly even hatched plots to kidnap **Manny Pacquiao** or one of his children, as well as my sister Kris or one of her children, with the plan to use them in bargaining for the release of their cohorts." The president vowed a military response would be forthcoming.

And no jokes about this being the worst crime of all but come on: It looks like 63-year-old actor **Mickey Rourke** might be planning another return to the ring this summer, according to Russian news agency TASS. Rourke has been seen training at old friend **Freddie Roach's** gym in Hollywood and that's great – the man is entitled to pursue his bliss. But as anyone who saw his last "comeback," which happened in Moscow in 2014, can attest, Rourke's boxing career should be viewed only as a work of fiction.

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Errol Spence Jr. made a strong statement in his knockout victory over Chris Algieri.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

ERROL SPENCE JR.

By **Michael Rosenthal**

The easy choice here would've been Anthony Joshua, who won his first world title by stopping Charles Martin. The problem was that Martin barely put up a fight. Even Joshua suggested we not get too excited about his victory.

Another good option would've been Gilberto Ramirez, who won a 168-pound title by shutting out Arthur Abraham. That was a big step for him.

In the end, though, welterweight contender Errol Spence Jr. made the biggest impact over the past month by doing what Manny Pacquiao and Amir Khan couldn't: He knocked out Chris Algieri.

I try to keep tight reins on hyperbole because I've seen many can't-miss young fighters crash and burn but it's hard not to be excited about Spence (20-0, 17 knockouts). The 2012 U.S. Olympian's God-given gifts and skill-set obviously are through the roof, as he demonstrated by putting Algieri away in the fifth round in Brooklyn.

It hardly ends there, though. I'm struck by his demeanor in the ring – patient, methodical, all business, as a veteran would operate. I love the way he relentlessly batters the body, as if his quick, accurate shots to the head aren't damaging enough. That work will pay off in every fight.

And he has both the punching power and killer instinct of a knockout artist; when Algieri was hurt, it was obvious that his night wouldn't last long.

That's the kind of performance that prompts fans to raise their eyebrows and shake their heads in awe. As promoter Lou DiBella put it: "Spence is a scary man."

The other top welterweights have been served notice. Errol Spence Jr. has arrived. RING

POUND FOR POUND: A P4P list without Manny Pacquiao? The unfathomable happened as Pacman (No. 7 last month) broke his 645-week run (that's almost 12½ years, folks) by walking into retirement after winning the rubber match with Tim Bradley (No. 9 last month). Bradley also disappeared, leaving two vacancies. No. 9 was claimed by Japanese phenom Naoya Inoue and Kell Brook returned to take No. 10.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Charles Martin (No. 9 last month) got knocked out in two rounds by Anthony Joshua (No. 8 at the time), thus completing his three-month term as babysitter for the IBF title. Martin left the ratings, Joshua moved up to No. 6 and undefeated Kiwi Joseph Parker arrived at No. 10.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Andre Ward finally confirmed that, yes, he's a light heavyweight now and was awarded the No. 5 slot after easily outpointing unrated Sullivan Barrera. That bumped No. 10-rated Jean Pascal off the list.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Callum Smith (No. 8 last month) moved up to No. 7 after stopping the previously unstopped Hadillah Mohoumadi (unrated) in the first round.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Chris Eubank Jr. (No. 8 last month) rose one spot after stopping Nick Blackwell (unrated) in 10 rounds, a victory that rapidly became a nightmare as Blackwell collapsed and was taken to the hospital with a brain bleed. Gilberto Ramirez (No. 4 last month) used his formidable reach to grab Arthur Abraham's belt with a 12-round shutout. King Arthur fell from No. 1 all the way to No. 7 while Ramirez climbed one notch to No. 3.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Pacquiao vacated the No. 2 spot, which lifted everyone and created room for undefeated Ukrainian Konstantin Ponomarev at No. 10. Bradley, meanwhile, fell from No. 4 to No. 6.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Jose Benavidez (No. 7 last month) last campaigned as a 140-pounder a year ago and has since fought above 150 so he was dropped. That opened the door for the U.K.'s Jack Catterall, who entered at No. 10. Eduard Troyanovsky rose from No. 8 to No. 7 after stopping unrated Cesar Cuenca (again).

LIGHTWEIGHTS: The division had become a bit stale and got a reshuffle in the middle based on recent results: Sharif Bogere and Terry Flanagan (Nos. 3 and 5 last month, respectively) swapped places, as did Richard Commey and Anthony Crolla (Nos. 4 and 6 last month, respectively). Undefeated Ohioan Robert Easter then knocked out Argenis Mendez of the Dominican Republic in five rounds and took his spot at No. 9. Veteran list-warmer Miguel Vazquez was replaced at No. 10 by up-and-coming Puerto Rican Felix Verdejo, who outpointed Jose Luis Rodriguez (unrated).

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Joseph Diaz Jr. replaced fellow American Ronny Rios at No. 10 after an impressive unanimous-decision victory over gatekeeper Jayson Velez (unrated). Satoshi Hosono (No. 9 last month) was lifted to No. 8 after a UD victory over unrated countryman Rikiya Fukuhara. Evgeny Gradovich (No. 8 last month) was replaced at No. 9 by Mexican Oscar Valdez, who stopped the Russian in Round 4.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

FLYWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No. 9-rated Yu Kimura announced his retirement and was removed. Rey Loreto (No. 10 last month) moved into Kimura's old spot and Mexico's Moises Fuentes came in at No. 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: In his first fight outside Nicaragua, Byron Rojas barged his way into the ratings at No. 2 after shocking longtime No. 1 incumbent Hekkie Budler with a close but unanimous decision. Budler dropped to No. 3, making Wanheng Menayothin the new top dog. Rojas' arrival pushed Mexican Jesus Silvestre (No. 10 last month) off the list.

No. 5-rated junior welterweight Adrien Broner took out Ashley Theophane in the ninth round on April 1.

THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE: WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C TYSON FURY
219 • U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

1. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
571 • Ukraine • 64-4-0 (53 KOs)

2. ALEXANDER POVETKIN
445 • Russia • 30-1-0 (22 KOs)

3. DEONTAY WILDER
127 • U.S. • 36-0-0 (35 KOs)

4. KUBRAT PULEV
237 • Bulgaria • 22-1-0 (12 KOs)

5. LUIS ORTIZ
19 • Cuba • 25-0-0 (22 KOs)

6. ANTHONY JOSHUA
26 • U.K. • • 16-0-0 (16 KOs)

7. BERMANE STIVERNE
157 • Canada • 25-2-1 (21 KOs)

8. BRYANT JENNINGS
110 • U.S. • 19-2-0 (10 KOs)

9. LUCAS BROWNE
8 • Australia • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

10. JOSEPH PARKER
3 • New Zealand • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GRIGORY DROZD
134 • Russia • 40-1-0 (28 KOs)

2. DENIS LEBEDEV
326 • Russia • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

3. KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI
37 • Poland • 26-0-0 (16 KOs)

4. MARCO HUCK
216 • Germany • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)

5. ILUNGA MAKABU
146 • Congo • 19-1-0 (18 KOs)

6. FIRAT ARSLAN
182 • Germany • 36-8-2 (22 KOs)

7. YOURI KALENGA
97 • Congo • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)

8. OLEKSANDR USYK
30 • Ukraine • 9-0-0 (9 KOs)

9. VICTOR RAMIREZ
25 • Argentina • 22-2-1 (17 KOs)

10. MAIRIS BRIEDIS
9 • Latvia • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. SERGEY KOVALEV
171 • Russia • 29-0-1 (26 KOs)

2. ADONIS STEVENSON
151 • Canada • 27-1-0 (22 KOs)

3. BERNARD HOPKINS
517 • U.S. • 55-7-2 (32 KOs)

4. ELEIDER ALVAREZ
111 • Colombia • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)

5. ANDRE WARD
5 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (15 KOs)

6. JUERGEN BRAEHMER
200 • Germany • 48-2-0 (35 KOs)

7. ISAAC CHILEMBA
209 • Malawi • 24-3-2 (10 KOs)

8. ANDRZEJ FONFARA
102 • Poland • 28-3-0 (16 KOs)

9. ARTUR BETERBIEV
72 • Russia • 9-0-0 (9 KOs)

10. VYACHESLAV SHABRANSKYY
19 • Ukraine • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. JAMES DEGALE
151 • U.K. • 22-1-0 (14 KOs)

2. BADOU JACK
53 • Sweden • 20-1-1 (12 KOs)

3. GILBERTO RAMIREZ
94 • Mexico • 34-0-0 (24 KOs)

4. ANDRE DIRRELL
87 • U.S. • 24-2-0 (16 KOs)

5. GEORGE GROVES
229 • U.K. • 22-3-0 (18 KOs)

6. CALLUM SMITH
47 • U.K. • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)

7. ARTHUR ABRAHAM
342 • Armenia • 44-5-0 (29 KOs)

8. ANTHONY DIRRELL
89 • U.S. • 28-1-1 (22 KOs)

9. FELIX STURM
10 • Germany • 40-5-3 (18 KOs)

10. FEDOR CHUDINOV
51 • Russia • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C CANELO ALVAREZ
23 • Mexico • 46-1-1 (32 KOs)

1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
229 • Kaz. • 35-0-0 (32 KOs)

2. DANIEL JACOBS
72 • U.S. • 31-1-0 (28 KOs)

3. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
74 • U.K. • 23-0-0 (12 KOs)

4. DAVID LEMIEUX
48 • Canada • 34-3-0 (31 KOs)

5. ANDY LEE
72 • Ireland • 34-3-1 (24 KOs)

6. PETER QUILLIN
204 • U.S. • 32-1-1 (23 KOs)

7. CHRIS EUBANK JR.
55 • U.K. • 22-1-0 (17 KOs)

8. HASSAN N'DAM
119 • Cameroon • 32-2-0 (18 KOs)

9. DANIEL GEALE
359 • Australia • 31-4-0 (16 KOs)

10. AVTANDIL KHURTSIDZE
8 • Georgia • 32-2-2 (21 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. ERISLANDY LARA
252 • Cuba • 22-2-2 (13 KOs)

2. AUSTIN TROUT
204 • U.S. • 30-2-0 (17 KOs)

3. MIGUEL COTTO
23 • P.R. • 40-5-0 (33 KOs)

4. JERMELL CHARLO
129 • U.S. • 27-0-0 (12 KOs)

5. JERMALL CHARLO
98 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (18 KOs)

6. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
28 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)

7. VANES MARTIROSYAN
334 • U.S. • 36-2-1 (21 KOs)

8. JULIAN WILLIAMS
72 • U.S. • 22-0-1 (14 KOs)

9. LIAM SMITH
33 • U.K. • 22-0-1 (12 KOs)

10. CARLOS MOLINA
252 • Mexico • 25-6-2 (8 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KELL BROOK
262 • U.K. • 36-0-0 (25 KOs)

2. AMIR KHAN
104 • U.K. • 31-3-0 (19 KOs)

3. KEITH THURMAN
164 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (22 KOs)

4. SHAWN PORTER
125 • U.S. • 26-1-1 (16 KOs)

5. TIM BRADLEY
203 • U.S. • 33-2-1 (13 KOs)

6. DANNY GARCIA
39 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (18 KOs)

7. ERROL SPENCE
30 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

8. JESSIE VARGAS
8 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (10 KOs)

9. DMITRY MIKHAYLENKO
17 • Russia • 21-0-0 (9 KOs)

10. KONSTANTIN PONOMAREV
3 • Ukraine • 30-0-0 (13 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. VIKTOR POSTOL
141 • Ukraine • 28-0-0 (12 KOs)

2. TERENCE CRAWFORD
54 • U.S. • 28-0-0 (20 KOs)

3. RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV
178 • Russia • 25-4-0 (18 KOs)

4. LUCAS MATTHYSSE
264 • Argentina • 37-4-0 (34 KOs)

5. ADRIEN BRONER
104 • U.S. • 32-2-0 (24 KOs)

6. ANTONIO OROZCO
30 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)

7. EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
22 • Russia • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

8. MAURICIO HERRERA
66 • U.S. • 22-5-0 (7 KOs)

9. ADRIAN GRANADOS
8 • U.S. • 17-4-2 (12 KOs)

10. JACK CATTERALL
5 • U.K. • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. JORGE LINARES
112 • Venezuela • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

2. DEJAN ZLATICANIN
55 • Montenegro • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)

3. TERRY FLANAGAN
29 • U.K. • 30-0-0 (12 KOs)

4. ANTHONY CROLLA
27 • U.K. • 30-4-3 (12 KOs)

5. SHARIF BOGERE
78 • Uganda • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)

6. RICHARD COMMEY
48 • Ghana • 24-0-0 (22 KOs)

7. RANCES BARTHELEMY
19 • Cuba • 24-0-0 (13 KOs)

8. DENIS SHAFIKOV
55 • Russia • 36-2-1 (19 KOs)

9. ROBERT EASTER
4 • U.S. • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

10. FELIX VERDEJO
2 • Puerto Rico • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
330 • Japan • 24-0-1 (20 KOs)

2. FRANCISCO VARGAS
94 • Mexico • 23-0-1 (17 KOs)

3. TAKASHI MIURA
160 • Japan • 29-3-2 (22 KOs)

4. ORLANDO SALIDO
84 • Mexico • 43-13 -3 (30 KOs)

5. ROMAN MARTINEZ
399 • P.R. • 29-2-3 (17 KOs)

6. JAVIER FORTUNA
78 • Dom. Rep. • 29-0-1 (21 KOs)

7. JOSE PEDRAZA
67 • P.R. • 22-0-0 (12 KOs)

8. BRYAN VASQUEZ
71 • Costa Rica • 34-2-0 (18 KOs)

9. SAUL RODRIGUEZ
23 • U.S. • 19-0-1 (14 KOs)

10. NICHOLAS WALTERS
19 • Jamaica • 26-0-1 (21 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. VASYL LOMACHENKO
104 • Ukraine • 5-1-0 (3 KOs)

2. GARY RUSSELL JR.
57 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)

3. LEO SANTA CRUZ
35 • U.S. • 32-0-1 (18 KOs)

4. LEE SELBY
111 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (8 KOs)

5. ABNER MARES
156 • Mexico • 29-2-1 (15 KOs)

6. SIMPIWE VETYEKA
125 • S. Africa • 29-3-0 (17 KOs)

7. JESUS CUELLAR
81 • Argentina • 28-1-0 (21 KOs)

8. SATOSHI HOSONO
19 • Japan • 31-2-1 (20 KOs)

9. OSCAR VALDEZ
3 • Mexico • 19-0-0 (17 KOs)

10. JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
5 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (11 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
286 • Cuba • 16-0-0 (10 KOs)

2. CARL FRAMPTON
188 • U.K. • 22-0-0 (14 KOs)

3. SCOTT QUIGG
179 • U.K. • 31-1-2 (23 KOs)

4. NONITO DONAIRE
57 • Phil. • 37-3-0 (24 KOs)

5. GENESIS SERVANIA
111 • Phil. • 27-0-0 (11 KOs)

6. SHINGO WAKE
75 • Japan • 20-4-2 (12 KOs)

7. ALBERT PAGARA
69 • Phil. • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

8. REY VARGAS
72 • Mexico • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)

9. JESSIE MAGDALENO
46 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (17 KOs)

10. HUGO RUIZ
9 • Mexico • 36-3-0 (32 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING'S Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his champion weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
234 • Japan • 25-0-2 (17 KOs)
2. **JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
83 • Dom. Rep. • 17-0-0 (8 KOs)
3. **ANSELMO MORENO**
422 • Panama • 35-4-1 (12 KOs)
4. **JAMIE MCDONNELL**
156 • U.K. • 28-2-1 (13 KOs)
5. **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
143 • Japan • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)
6. **LEE HASKINS**
46 • U.K. • 32-3-0 (14 KOs)
7. **SURIYAN SOR RUNGVISAI**
41 • Thailand • 46-6-1 (23 KOs)
8. **PUNGLUANG SOR SINGYU**
32 • Thailand • 52-3-0 (35 KOs)
9. **MARLON TAPALES**
19 • Phil. • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
10. **ZOLANI TETE**
7 • S. Africa • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **NAOYA INOUE**
69 • Japan • 9-0-0 (8 KOs)
2. **CARLOS CUADRAS**
208 • Mexico • 35-0-1 (27 KOs)
3. **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
156 • Thailand • 39-4-1 (36 KOs)
4. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
312 • Argentina • 45-2-2 (24 KOs)
5. **MCJOE ARROYO**
98 • P.R. • 17-0-0 (8 KOs)
6. **KOHEI KONO**
28 • Japan • 31-8-1 (13 KOs)
7. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
187 • Thailand • 58-1-1 (23 KOs)
8. **ARTHUR VILLANUEVA**
158 • Phil. • 28-1-0 (14 KOs)
9. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
32 • Panama • 34-4-0 (24 KOs)
10. **KHALID YAFAI**
7 • U.K. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C ROMAN GONZALEZ
129 • Nicaragua • 45-0-0 (38 KOs)

1. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
160 • Mexico • 33-2-0 (24 KOs)
2. **AMNAT RUENROENG**
103 • Thailand • 17-0-0 (5 KOs)
3. **KAZUTO IOKA**
84 • Japan • 19-1-0 (11 KOs)
4. **BRIAN VILORIA**
251 • U.S. • 36-5-0 (22 KOs)
5. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
111 • S. Africa • 32-2-0 (21 KOs)
6. **EDGAR SOSA**
207 • Mexico • 51-9-0 (30 KOs)
7. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
239 • Argentina • 36-3-0 (19 KOs)
8. **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
86 • P.R. • 16-2-0 (14 KOs)
9. **NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI**
44 • Thailand • 33-0-0 (26 KOs)
10. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
29 • Phil. • 21-3-0 (13 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C DONNIE NIETES
238 • Phil. • 37-1-4 (21 KOs)

1. **RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
72 • Japan • 23-2-1 (10 KOs)
2. **RANDY PETALCORIN**
103 • Phil. • 23-1-1 (18 KOs)
3. **PEDRO GUEVARA**
161 • Mexico • 26-2-1 (17 KOs)
4. **AKIRA YAEGASHI**
17 • Japan • 23-5-0 (12 KOs)
5. **JAVIER MENDOZA**
55 • Mexico • 24-3-1 (19 KOs)
6. **MILAN MELINDO**
76 • Phil. • 33-2-0 (12 KOs)
7. **ALBERTO ROSSEL**
157 • Peru • 34-9-0 (13 KOs)
8. **GANIGAN LOPEZ**
8 • Mexico • 27-6-0 (17 KOs)
9. **REY LORETO**
55 • Phil. • 22-13-0 (14 KOs)
10. **MOISES FUENTES**
2 • Mexico • 24-2-1 (13 KOs)

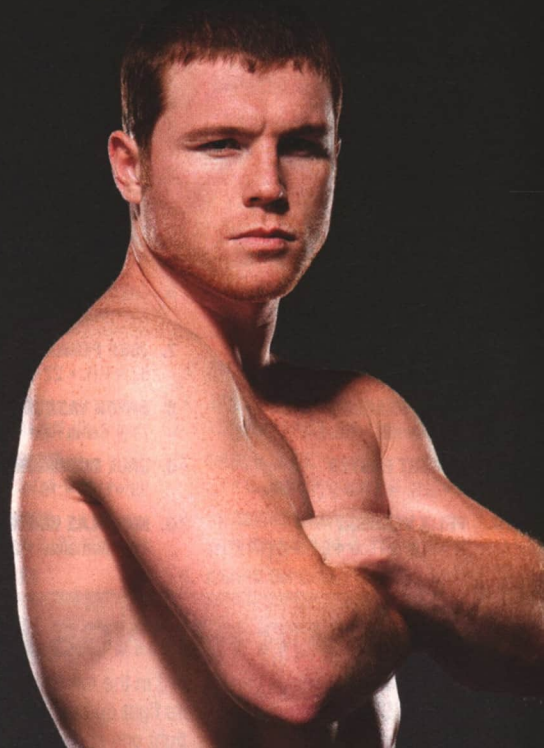
STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
254 • Thailand • 41-0-0 (16 KOs)
2. **BYRON ROJAS**
6 • Nicaragua • 17-2-3 (8 KOs)
3. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
188 • S. Africa • 29-2-0 (9 KOs)
4. **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
82 • Thailand • 12-0-0 (6 KOs)
5. **KOSEI TANAKA**
78 • Japan • 6-0-0 (3 KOs)
6. **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
17 • Mexico • 16-3-1 (9 KOs)
7. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
161 • Japan • 30-8-0 (12 KOs)
8. **CHAO ZHONG XIONG**
76 • China • 26-6-1 (14 KOs)
9. **DENVER CUELLO**
76 • Phil. • 36-5-6 (24 KOs)
10. **CARLOS BUITRAGO**
185 • Nicaragua • 28-2-1 (16 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
99 • Nicaragua • 45-0-0 (38 KOs)
2. **SERGEY KOVALEV**
59 • Russia • 29-0-1 (26 KOs)
3. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
63 • Kazakhstan • 35-0-0 (32 KOs)
4. **ANDRE WARD**
33 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (15 KOs)
5. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
140 • Cuba • 16-0-0 (10 KOs)
6. **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
52 • U.S. • 28-0-0 (19 KOs)
7. **CANELO ALVAREZ**
23 • Mexico • 46-1-1 (32 KOs)
8. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
50 • Japan • 25-0-2 (17 KOs)
9. **NAOYA INOUE**
3 • Japan • 9-0-0 (8 KOs)
10. **KELL BROOK**
3 • U.K. • 36-0-0 (25 KOs)



THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

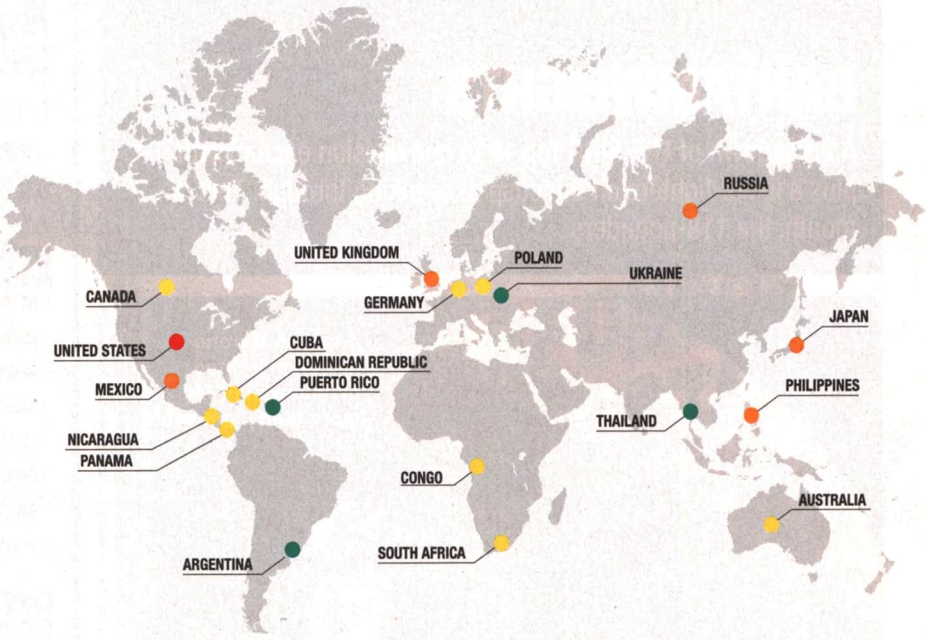
A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

●	UNITED STATES	32	
●	UNITED KINGDOM	19	↑1
●	MEXICO	17	
●	JAPAN	13	↓1
●	PHILIPPINES	11	↓1
●	RUSSIA	10	↓1
●	THAILAND	8	
●	PUERTO RICO	6	↑1
●	UKRAINE	6	↑1
●	ARGENTINA	5	
●	CUBA	4	
●	GERMANY	4	
●	SOUTH AFRICA	4	
●	CANADA	3	↓1
●	NICARAGUA	3	↑1
●	AUSTRALIA	2	
●	CONGO	2	
●	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2	↓1
●	PANAMA	2	
●	POLAND	2	
	ARMENIA	1	
	BULGARIA	1	
	CAMEROON	1	
	CHINA	1	
	COLOMBIA	1	
	COSTA RICA	1	
	GEORGIA	1	
	GHANA	1	
	IRELAND	1	
	JAMAICA	1	
	KAZAKHSTAN	1	
	LATVIA	1	
	MALAWI	1	
	MONTENEGRO	1	
	NEW ZEALAND	1	↑1
	PERU	1	
	SWEDEN	1	
	UGANDA	1	
	VENEZUELA	1	

Countries out (from last month): *none*

Countries in: *New Zealand*



LATIN VS. LATIN

Each of four areas that comprise Latin America – Mexico, South America, Central America and the Caribbean – is well represented in the RING Ratings. Here's how it breaks down without dominant Mexico:

DIVISION	SOUTH	CENT.	CARIB.
HEAVYWEIGHTS	0	0	1
CRUISERWEIGHTS	1	0	0
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	1	0	0
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	0	0	0
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	0	0	0
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS	0	0	2
WELTERWEIGHTS	0	0	0
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS	1	0	0
LIGHTWEIGHTS	1	0	2
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS	0	1	3
FEATHERWEIGHTS	1	0	0
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS	0	0	1
BANTAMWEIGHTS	0	1	1
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS	1	1	1
FLYWEIGHTS	1	1	1
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS	1	0	0
STRAWWEIGHTS	0	2	0
TOTAL	8	6	12

Note: These countries have rated fighters. South America – Argentina (5), Colombia (1), Peru (1) and Venezuela (1). Central America – Nicaragua (3), Panama (2) and Costa Rica (1). Caribbean – Puerto Rico (6), Cuba (4) and Dominican Republic (2).

POUND-FOR-POUND

Wasn't it recently that people were talking about Puerto Rican boxers being in a slump? Well, that doesn't appear to be the case. Puerto Rico is No. 1 again in our periodic list of nations with the lowest ratio of RING-rated fighters to population. The figure denotes the number of people per each rated fighter (with the number of rated fighters in parentheses).

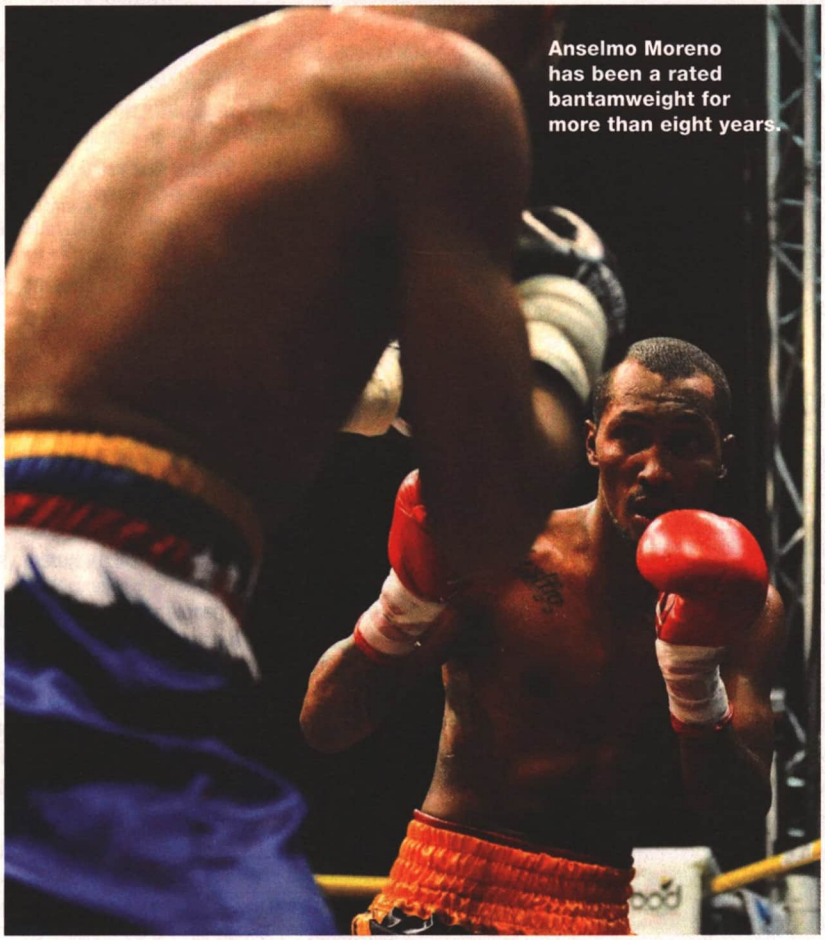
1. **PUERTO RICO** – 599,726 (6)
2. **MONTENEGRO** – 647, 073 (1)
3. **PANAMA** – 1,828,512 (2)
4. **NICARAGUA** – 1,969,294 (3)
5. **LATVIA** – 1,986,705 (1)
6. **CUBA** – 2,757,858 (4)
7. **JAMAICA** – 2,950,210 (1)
8. **ARMENIA** – 3,056,382 (1)
9. **UNITED KINGDOM** – 3,373,064 (19)
10. **NEW ZEALAND** – 4,438,393 (1)
11. **COSTA RICA** – 4,814,144 (1)
12. **IRELAND** – 4,892,305 (1)
13. **GEORGIA** – 4,931,226 (1)
14. **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC** – 5,239,378 (2)
15. **MEXICO** – 7,160,989 (17)

Note: The U.S. has one rated fighter per every 10,042,777 people, which is 23rd on the list. China has one rated fighter among its 1,367,485,388 people. (Source: CIA World Factbook)

FOCUS ON . . .

BANTAMWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 118-pounders.



Anselmo Moreno has been a rated bantamweight for more than eight years.

MOST WEEKS RATED: ANSELMO MORENO **422**

FEWEST WEEKS RATED: ZOLANI TETE **7**

OLDEST: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA **33**

YOUNGEST: MARLON TAPALES **24**

MOST FIGHTS: PUNGLUANG SOR SINGYU **55**

FEWEST FIGHTS: JUAN CARLOS PAYANO **16**

HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: PAYANO **100 PERCENT**

LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: SURIYAN SOR RUNGVISAI **86.7 PERCENT**

MOST KOS: SOR SINGYU **35**

FEWEST KOS: PAYANO **8**

LONGEST CURRENT WINNING STREAK: JAMIE MCDONNELL, YAMANAKA **20 FIGHTS**

ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST: YAMANAKA **NO. 8**

TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10: LEE HASKINS **(IBF)**, PAYANO **(WBA)**, SOR SINGYU **(WBO)**, YAMANAKA **(WBC)**

ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): STUART HALL, RYO MATSUMOTO, LUIS NERY, LIBORIO SOLIS, RAU'SHEE WARREN

OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
FEATHERWEIGHT: GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

DOUG FISCHER RINGTV.COM EDITOR

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BRIAN HARTY RING MAGAZINE MANAGING EDITOR

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BANTAMWEIGHT: NAOYA INOUE
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

MITCH ABRAMSON STAFF WRITER

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
FEATHERWEIGHT: GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

Note: *This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*

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IFS, BUTS AND MAYBES

TYSON FURY'S VICTORY OVER WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO BLEW THE HEAVYWEIGHT DIVISION WIDE OPEN. THE QUESTION NOW: **HOW WILL IT PLAY OUT?**

By **Elliot Worsell**

Tyson Fury and Wladimir Klitschko (top), Anthony Joshua (middle left) and Deontay Wilder (bottom left) are among those vying to be No. 1.

For the best part of a decade Wladimir Klitschko had the heavyweight division, and us all, right where he wanted – on the end of his long jab. Over and over, he'd remind us of the fact, too; when they tried to run, he'd slam it into their face, and when they tried to invade and get close, he'd retain control in the form of a clinch. The opponent in the ring would accept his fate, typically a stoppage defeat, while future challengers, those who claimed they carried the key to his lock, sheepishly looked the other way. We, the spectators, often did the same.

Then Nov. 28, 2015, happened. Tyson Fury, an unbeaten gypsy Traveller from England, proved, at 6 feet 9 inches, he was too tall to be controlled by clinches, too rangy to acquiesce to the jab and too composed to throw away the healthy lead he'd established on the scorecards. A unanimous decision was the reward for such rebellion. Somehow he made it look easy.

With that, the floodgates opened. Those who once looked the other way and possessed only faint hope of becoming champion were now focused on the belts, their dream potentially a reality, and even those who had once been tamed by

Klitschko were suddenly hopeful of getting a shot at someone else.

"I think Fury beating Klitschko was a good thing," says former WBO heavyweight champion Lamon Brewster, the last man to topple Klitschko all the way back in 2004. "The whole division seemed almost afraid of Klitschko because he had reigned so long. Fury's win gave young heavyweights the courage to say, 'We can step up and win the title, too. If Fury can do it, I can do it.'"

When talking long-term, though, it's hard to know if relieving Klitschko's stranglehold will be for the better. Big men will continue to dominate the division, we know that much, but now, as the title becomes fractured all over again and oversized, athletic novices possess pieces of sport's greatest prize, we could find ourselves in the midst of yet another quandary. We may soon be trying to determine whether rudimentary skills and youthful enthusiasm are preferable to longevity and authenticity.

"It depends on who the heavyweight champion is," says Adam Booth, former coach of ex-titleholder David Haye, one of many past Klitschko victims. "If the champion was Larry Holmes or Mike Tyson and he was fighting the best contenders constantly, and beating them convincingly, you'd celebrate the fact you have a single world heavyweight champion. But if it's a question of having it how it was, with Klitschko dominant, or how it is now, I'll take it as it is now. I can't see anyone establishing themselves as the No. 1 but we will get a lot of interesting and exciting fights."

Said former IBF heavyweight titleholder Chris Byrd: "I don't see one dominant guy who has the skill-set to reign. On any given night, they can all lose. There are too many flaws. Nobody sets themselves apart and makes you go, 'Whoa, that guy is unbeatable. He has no flaws. He'll

Luis Ortiz lurks ominously among the best big men.

NO ONE IS PERFECT

The strengths and weaknesses of the six top heavyweights in the world.

ANTHONY JOSHUA

▲ **Up:** Joshua is a remarkable physical specimen, a fit, powerful heavyweight with enough skills to overwhelm even capable opponents.

▼ **Down:** Joshua's technique is good but he must continue to polish it if he is to have a long reign in the division, which is what some are predicting.

TYSON FURY

▲ **Up:** Fury looks awkward and doesn't have tremendous power but he moves well for such a big man and is clever, as Wladimir Klitschko found out.

▼ **Down:** Height and brains go only so far. Fury's limited physical tools and so-so punching power could work against him someday soon.

WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

▲ **Up:** Klitschko created an impenetrable fighting style, one built behind his long jab that took full advantage of his height. He seemed to be untouchable.

▼ **Down:** An aging Klitschko, now 40, couldn't adjust when a taller and well-prepared Fury executed a good game plan flawlessly.

DEONTAY WILDER

▲ **Up:** Wilder's size (6 feet 7 inches), athleticism and crushing punching power have allowed him to remain unbeaten and entertaining.

▼ **Down:** Wilder was a late starter, which means he's still developing as a boxer. That limitation could end up being his Achilles heel.

LUIS ORTIZ

▲ **Up:** Like many Cuban boxers, Ortiz has an impressive amateur pedigree. He also is left-handed, which can be tricky for opponents, and has punching power.

▼ **Down:** This is more a question mark: We don't know what Ortiz is made of because he's proven little as a pro even at 37. The clock is ticking for him.

ALEXANDER POVETKIN

▲ **Up:** Povetkin had an excellent amateur career that was capped by an Olympic gold medal in 2004. Accordingly, he has a well-honed skill set.

▼ **Down:** Povetkin might lack the physical tools of some heavyweights. He struggled against the quicker Marco Huck and bigger Wladimir Klitschko.

dominate for a while.' That's good for the division, though. We will go into title fights and not know who is going to win. It hasn't been like that for a while."

Full ownership of the division is already proving problematic. No sooner had Fury won the belts from Klitschko than the IBF decided to strip him and essentially gift-wrap Anthony Joshua, his British rival, the chance to win it from temporary "champ" Charles Martin. Joshua didn't ask twice. He blew Martin away in just two rounds on April 9, thus joining Fury, the WBA and WBO titleholder, and WBC titlist Deontay Wilder as joint rulers of the division. And the performance, before a sold-out London crowd, announced the arrival not only of a legitimate heavyweight champion of the world but a bona fide marketable star, especially in his native England.

"I think Joshua is very impressive," says television analyst Larry Merchant. "Wladimir Klitschko told me he has sparred Joshua and Wilder and was more impressed by Joshua because of his size and strength and his ability to take a punch."

Added Brewster: "Joshua is sharp. You can tell he puts in the work and is humble. You can also tell he loves to learn and will never stop improving. A lot of these guys just want to get rich and famous but Joshua puts his passion for boxing first. That makes him a dangerous fighter.

"I was impressed with the win against Martin. He did something few fighters in history have done; a southpaw stepped in with his jab and he countered the jab with a straight right hand. It was beautiful. It was picture-perfect. It should be punch of the year."

Six-foot Byrd, though, a man whose erudite southpaw style compensated for his lack of size, is a little more wary of lavishing the latest heavyweight beltholder with undue praise.

"When I watch him box, I see a lot of things that need improving," Byrd says. "I'm a skills guy and Joshua's skill-set is not really great at this point. He does a lot of things wrong. Yeah, he got the Olympic gold medal but what does that mean nowadays? I'm an Olympic junkie. I watch all the boxing. He was a big guy but the talent and the skill-set didn't blow me away.

"Still, he's only 26 years old. He's not great technically but he has the size and the athleticism to be dominant once he gains experience and brushes up on his skill-set. I just hope he doesn't become a knucklehead who thinks he knows everything. He has a long way to go."

Although green, Joshua is a see-it-to-believe-it physical specimen and has dispatched all 16 of his opponents within the scheduled distance. There was a momentary wobble upon receiving a Dillian Whyte left hook to the chin last December, but, that aside, the 2012 Olympic gold medalist has so far had it all his own way as a pro.

"When Joshua gets into deep waters and is getting hit hard, what will happen?" wonders Brewster. "We don't know yet. This is not a three-round amateur fight. This is professional boxing. We can see he has talent but we have no idea if he can fight yet. He looks the part, he's definitely humble, but, until he's in a proper fight and is being hit by shots, we are just guessing."

It's tough to comprehend a heavyweight champion needing time to learn fundamentals and improve his game. It doesn't sound right. The heavyweight champion was, after all, once the king of kings and the baddest man on the planet. No more, it seems. Instead, what we currently have are a number of titles grasped by those most athletic, those most gifted, those with the most potential, those most likely to ...

"It's about size and athleticism because of the lack of skill-set," says Byrd. "You don't see many guys with good movement, who think a lot, who can counterpunch. I grew up in an era where you had to do those things to get anywhere. I'd think, 'OK, you're a big guy but I'm going to figure a

way to beat you.' Sure enough, I'd beat the big guys who didn't have a particularly good skill-set.

"The reason Lennox Lewis reigned for so long was because he was a big guy and he had a good skill-set. He could box. When the next heavyweight with size and a skill-set emerges, he'll be the guy to dominate. But we don't know who that guy is yet."

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Wilder was scheduled to defend his belt against Alexander Povetkin on May 21 in Moscow.

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Wilder becoming a heavyweight champion was supposed to be the breakout moment the division craved. It was meant to signify the power shifting back to the United States. It was going to herald a new dawn. But, while the Alabama-native's charm and knack for scoring knockouts are doing their bit, his development as an attraction has been slow.

"Al Haymon (Wilder's manager) has yet to show he can take a fighter and develop him into a star," says Merchant. "They hope that by building Wilder's record he will attract attention but that hasn't translated into audiences or coverage. If Wilder was to fight Fury or Joshua, I'm sure it would get a lot of attention in the U.S. but there is no buzz about Wilder alone. General sports fans don't know that we have an American as WBC heavyweight champion. His name means nothing outside boxing circles."

Within such circles, however, Wilder, 35 knockouts to his name, continues to make all the right noises. Booth, who brought Wilder, 30, over to England to spar with Haye in 2011 and 2013, has always been fond of "The Bronze Bomber."

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Fury, 27, stands alone as the RING heavyweight champion. He's doing his best to uphold the tradition, to keep the lineage. Yet, curiously, perhaps owing to the nature of his standout victory over Klitschko, he appears the one of whom more questions are being asked. "I don't know about Fury," says Merchant. "I know it was a disciplined performance against Klitschko, and he fought the fight he needed to fight in order to win, but it was an awful, ugly fight."

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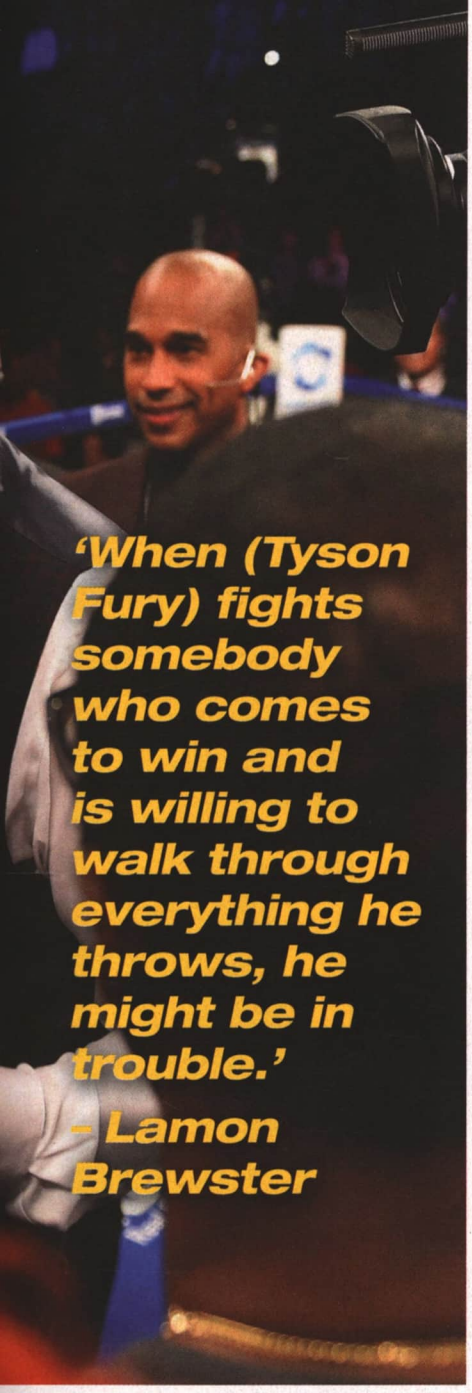

Fury (right, following a Wilder victory) is a master self-promoter. But can he beat Klitschko again?

Fury punches hard enough or takes a good enough punch to reign in the heavyweight division. When he fights somebody who comes to win and is willing to walk through everything he throws, he might be in trouble. Remember, he was put down by Steve Cunningham, a natural cruiserweight.

"He fought an excellent fight against Wladimir Klitschko, and there's no such thing as a fluke, but I'm interested in seeing the rematch because I truly think something was wrong with Wladimir that night. He was going through some things in his personal life and didn't fight the way he normally does. He panicked against a taller man and tried to fight like a smaller man. He didn't fight his fight. I'd like to see him do that in the rematch and then we'll see how good Tyson Fury is."

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Of course, there are some other heavyweights outside the recognized titleholders who, given the suddenly capricious nature of the division, could emerge in positions of power in the near future. Klitschko may well gain sweet revenge over Fury on July 9. Alexander Povetkin will have been able to fulfill his potential at 36 with a victory over Wilder. Cuban southpaw Luis Ortiz, meanwhile, a fresher name (albeit 37 years of age), is undefeated in 25 fights, has knocked out perennial contenders Tony Thompson and Bryant Jennings, and is fast becoming an unspoken word in the division.

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Added Booth: "Ortiz is the one nobody wants to talk about. I remember (British promoter/manager) Mickey Duff used to ask two questions when offered an opponent: 'Is he a southpaw?' and 'Can he punch?' With Ortiz you've got a southpaw who can punch. He's also big, fearless and looks pretty tough, too. I think everybody is hoping he gets old very quickly."

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"Do not write off Wladimir Klitschko," warns Byrd. "He loves being champion too much. He will want to go out as champion. But, to do so, he has to deal with a few things. For years he had the luxury of being taller than 95 percent of the guys he fought and, because he's a power puncher, he also had the luxury of boxing guys from the outside and keeping them honest with his power. Those advantages disappear in a fight with Fury, though.

"To me, he didn't look old in the first fight. They said he couldn't pull the trigger. I disagree. He didn't want to pull the trigger. He knows he doesn't have a great chin yet he also knows he has to go forward, take a risk and try to initiate a fight with Fury. Is Wladimir prepared to take that risk in the rematch? We don't know."

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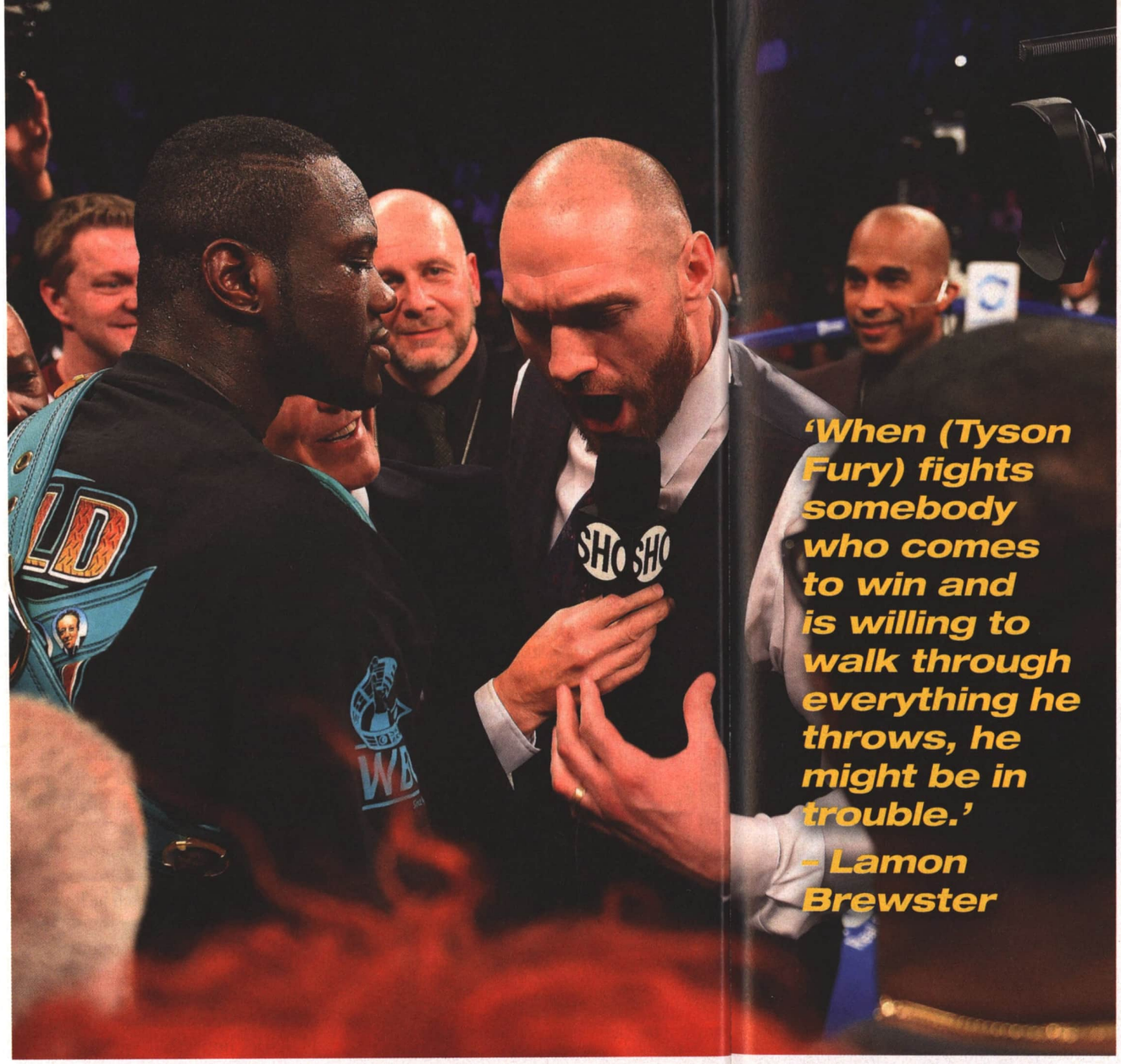

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NAOKI FUKUDA

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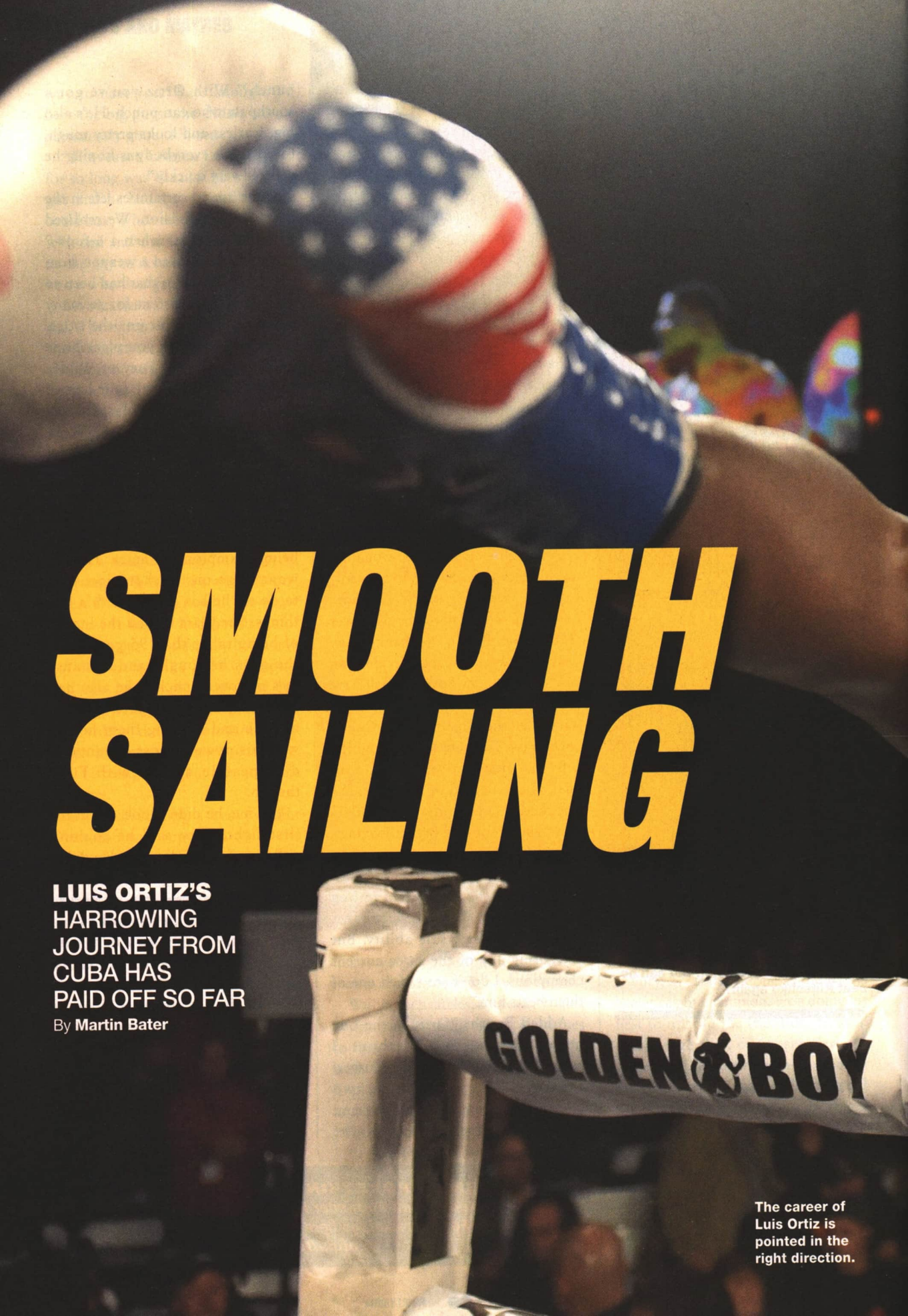
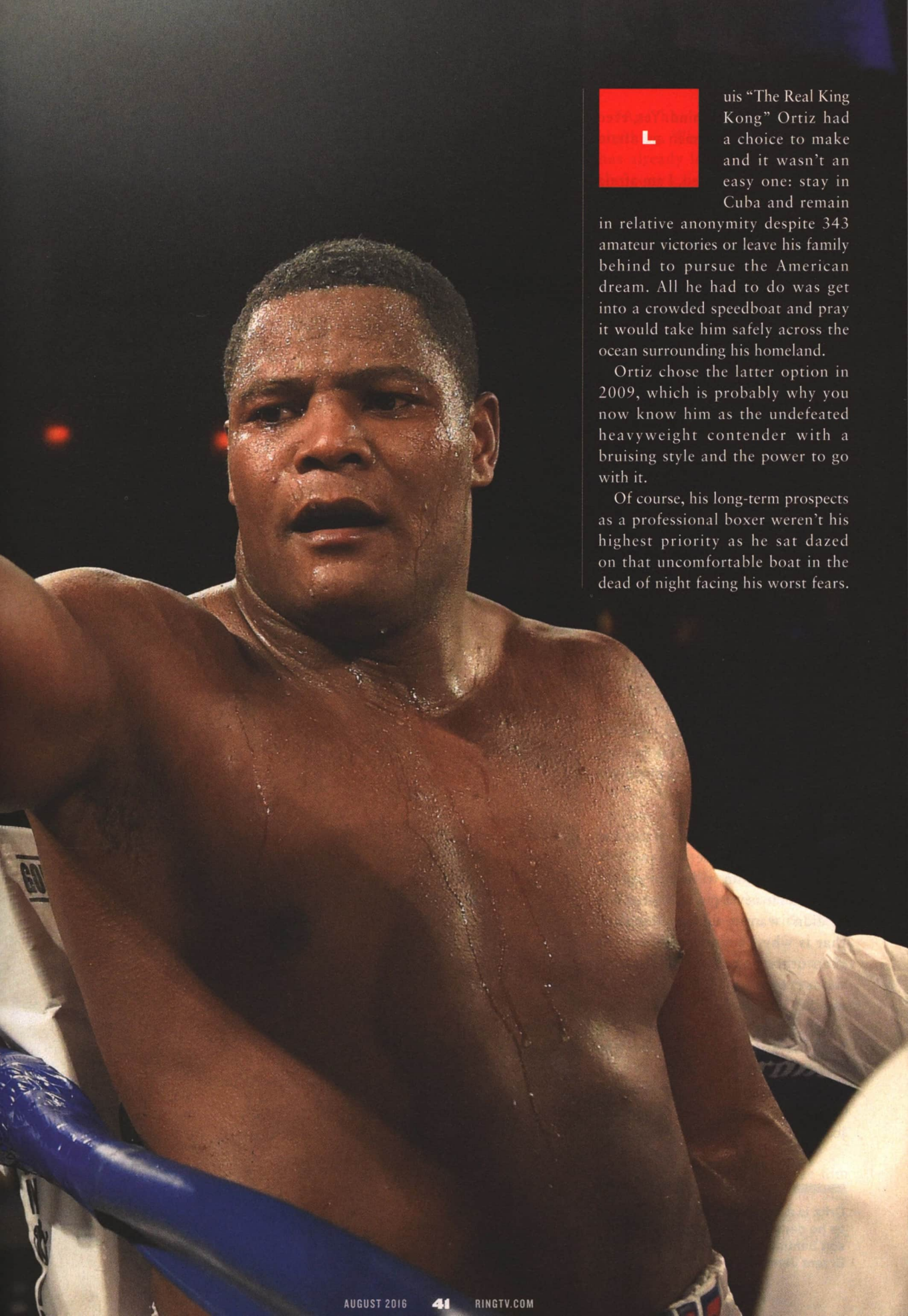
SMOOTH SAILING

LUIS ORTIZ'S HARROWING JOURNEY FROM CUBA HAS PAID OFF SO FAR

By **Martin Bater**



The career of Luis Ortiz is pointed in the right direction.



Luis "The Real King Kong" Ortiz had a choice to make and it wasn't an easy one: stay in Cuba and remain in relative anonymity despite 343 amateur victories or leave his family behind to pursue the American dream. All he had to do was get into a crowded speedboat and pray it would take him safely across the ocean surrounding his homeland.

Ortiz chose the latter option in 2009, which is probably why you now know him as the undefeated heavyweight contender with a bruising style and the power to go with it.

Of course, his long-term prospects as a professional boxer weren't his highest priority as he sat dazed on that uncomfortable boat in the dead of night facing his worst fears.

Survival was on his mind. Yes, even the strongest, biggest men are afraid sometimes.

"Besides being scared, I am afraid of the ocean. It was night time and all I could see was darkness all around me as the boat rocked back and forth," Ortiz remembered. He couldn't give up or turn back; that wasn't an option anymore. His future was on the line.

"I wasn't scared (after a while); I had hope," he said.

Ortiz eventually made it to Miami but starting anew in a foreign country brings a whole new set of challenges. Ortiz wanted to be a champion but needed a helping hand.

Enter Juan Jimenez, owner of King Kong Gymnasium in Miami and Ortiz's manager, who saw the untapped potential in a fighter some people have described as "the Cuban version of Evander Holyfield."

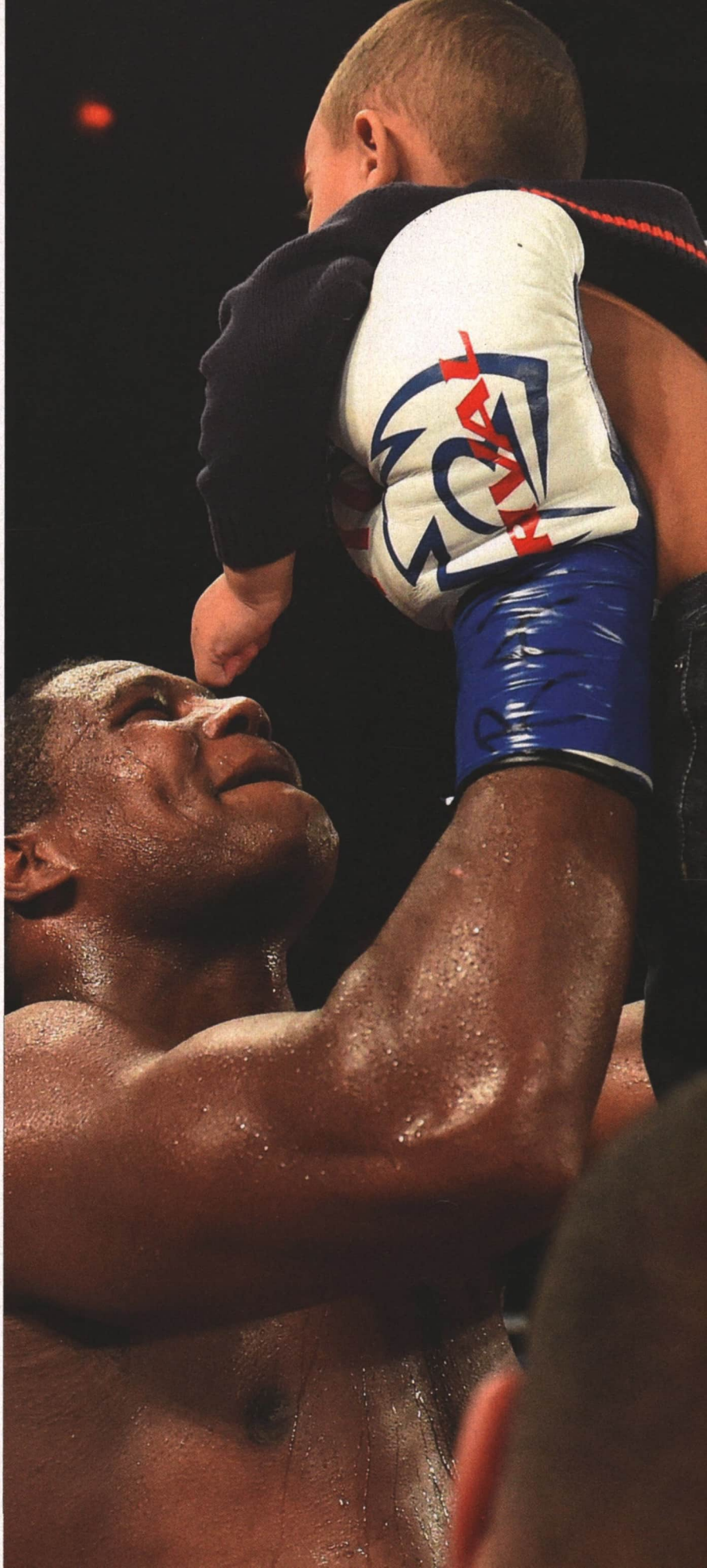
Ortiz had his emotional ups and downs his first few months in South Florida but Jimenez helped him through his funk and back into the ring. He is now 25-0 (with 22 knockouts) and one of the leading contenders for the heavyweight championship.

He has come a long way.

"Luis was Cuban and I wanted to help him after we met late in 2009. I always saw him willing to put the work in. He never put on a tired face or didn't want to do something and that is why I supported him more than other boxers," said Jimenez, whose gym is now home to a number of elite fighters in different weight classes.

Ortiz, however, is the one who "leads by example."

The big man, all 6 feet 4 inches and roughly 240 pounds of him, is a jolly, gentle giant with an easy smile



Oritz is a devoted family man, as he demonstrates here with son Santiago after his fight with Bryant Jennings.

ORTIZ: THROUGH THE YEARS

1979 – Born on March 29 in Camaguey, Cuba

2002 – Won his first of five medals in Cuban national competitions.

2005 – Won gold at the Pan American Games and silver in the World Cup, his best international performances.

2009 – Defected from Cuba to the U.S. by speedboat.

2010 – Turned pro. Stopped Lamar Davis only 1 minute, 18 seconds into his debut.

2014 – Won the "interim" WBA heavyweight title by stopping Lateef Kayode in the first round on Sept. 11 but tested positive for the anabolic steroid nandrolone. The fight was ruled a no-contest, he was stripped of his title and he was suspended for eight months.

2015 – Stopped Bryant Jennings in the seventh round on Dec. 19, probably Ortiz's most significant victory.

2016 – Knocked out Tony Thompson in six rounds on March 5, his most recent fight.

who derives immeasurable joy – and motivation – from being a family man. Wife Lisdey arrived from Cuba in 2013 while she was pregnant with their second child. Liz Mercedes, 7, was born in Cuba while Claudia, 3, and Santiago, 2, were born in the United States.

In the ring and the gym, he's all business. The smile is typically replaced by a scowl when he goes to work.

"Luis is the guiding light, the first one who arrives to bleed in the gym," Jimenez said. "All others must follow his example because effort is non-negotiable. We would run on the beach or with a heavy sack of sand on the street and he would never complain."

Ortiz's daily training regimen includes running, CrossFit training and tactical planning with trainer Herman Caicedo, the last of which is his favorite part of the day because "it makes him a smarter boxer."

His impressive 88 percent knockout rate might obscure a Floyd Mayweather Jr.-like tactical discipline rare for a boxer of his size, which has its roots in the successful Cuban amateur program.

That includes exhaustive study of his opponents' fights, which is one reason he was able to take out Byron Polley, Matias Vidondo, Bryant Jennings and Tony Thompson in his last four fights, he said.

He can appreciate a knockout as much as the next guy but he admires heavyweights like Muhammad Ali, Lennox Lewis and the Klitschko brothers, fighters who have used their minds at least as much as their power to win fights.

"I would have loved to fight Ali in his prime because of his technical prowess and crazy stunts in the ring," Ortiz said.

One more obstacle Ortiz faces, at least according to some, is his age. He's 37. That's not ancient for a heavyweight but the clock is ticking.

Ortiz isn't fazed. He believes in himself and his preparation.

"Age has nothing to do with anything. Whoever believes it does has already lost," Ortiz said with the conviction of someone who loves proving doubters wrong. "You have to think and be calm at all times when you are in the ring. Your opportunity will come to you. It's just a matter of sizing up your opponent and seizing your chance.

"I will fight against whoever is in line to be a world champion. Whenever someone comes and defeats me by making me go beyond what I think I'm capable of, then I will retire."

Retirement is far from his mind for now but the future isn't. And he has an idea how it will look in at least one respect.

Ortiz took the harrowing trip from Cuba and has willingly led the hard life of a boxer in an effort to realize his potential and provide for his family. He wants a different life for his only son.

"I wouldn't want Santiago to be a boxer but fate is unpredictable," he said. "I would rather see him play baseball. Boxing is for crazy people who are both talented and lucky; it's not for everyone."

Ortiz said he has already fulfilled his American dream even though he has yet to win a major world title. He loves his work and is happy living in Miami. And he became a U.S. citizen this past March.

He still has one more wish left to be granted, though.

"I haven't seen my mom in five years. I would like to see her again someday," Ortiz said with hope in his voice.

Why not? Ortiz made it safely to his new country, as did his family. And he has become one of the most feared heavyweights in the world. To say things have gone Ortiz's way is an understatement.

It's not difficult to imagine him one day embracing his mother and his immediate family at ringside as the new heavyweight champion of the world. RING

Sergey Kovalev is scheduled to fight Issac Chilemba near his hometown in Russia on July 11.

STRIKING FEAR

NO ONE IN BOXING IS MORE MENACING THAN **SERGEY KOVALEV** BUT THERE'S MORE TO HIM THAN THAT

By **Norm Frauenheim**

There's something elemental about Sergey Kovalev. Maybe it's in the look. Those eyes sometimes flash like a spark off flint and that wide smile is full of more teeth than you'd see in the mouth of an incoming crocodile.

Or maybe it's in the manner. Kovalev reacts to trash-talk the way Clint Eastwood's old character, detective Harry Callahan, would confront a suspect. *Go ahead, make my day.*

Kovalev always has followed through on that threat, delivering promised punishment for insults and then expressing regret that he wasn't allowed an additional round or two to administer some more vengeance.

Whatever the elements, all the pieces fit. Mix them into a single alloy and the result is Kovalev, a fighter as feared as any in his generation.

It's an image, a rep that works for him and a media that needs the audience. Fear is a marketable weapon, significant and powerful in the weeks of hype and psychology before the opening bell. It's a question of knowing when and how to put it in play.

For Kovalev, that timing and know-how have been as powerful and

precise as his right hand throughout a steady and improbable rise to stardom. They, too, are elements in the compelling, often controversial, makeup of THE RING's No. 1-rated light heavyweight and the publication's 2014 Fighter of the Year. If he's not No. 1 in the pound-for-pound debate, he is – with apologies to Dos Equis – the most interesting man in boxing.

In so many ways, he's still introducing himself to fans and opponents, in part perhaps because of his steady improvement since a 2013 victory over Nathan Cleverly in the U.K.

Before Cleverly, he was just another Russian name. After Cleverly, he's called ruthless as often as he's called Russian in the everyday media. To call a Russian ruthless is almost redundant, if not a stereotype.

Yet Kovalev has been accused of using stereotypes himself. Before Kovalev scored a brutal stoppage in a one-sided rematch in January, Jean Pascal called him a racist for the way he has characterized black athletes. Kovalev apologized. It's all part of a cultural exchange, perhaps, with Kovalev getting to know a new language on a different continent that knows little about where and how he grew up.

Yet it's those Russian roots that say as much about who he is and who he is becoming. The internet is full of photos of a Russian flag flying like a superhero's cape above Kovalev's head during a post-fight celebration. For the last seven years, he has lived in North Carolina, south Florida and now Los Angeles. His infant son was born in the U.S.

But he's still that guy who grew up amid the factories and mines of Kopeysk, about eight miles of roadwork from the city of Chelyabinsk in west-central Russia near the border with Kazakhstan. In American time zones, it's a place not known for much. A handful of NHL players, including a Kovalev (Alexei) are from there. In 2013, there were worldwide headlines and viral videos after a meteor lit up the sky like a nuclear explosion.

Now there's Sergey (no relation to Alexei) Kovalev, who comes from a town represented by a red-and-white flag. In the middle of that flag, there's a coal-miner's pickaxe, a historical symbol and maybe a modern icon if Kovalev's right hand turns him into a boxing legend.

"Mostly factories, factories for metal and steel, are there now," Kovalev said of an industrial region west of the Ural Mountains. "You grow up and you go to work in those factories. My mom, she was a crane operator."

On July 11, he's going back for a fight against South African journeyman Isaac Chilemba in the city of Ekaterinburg, about 135 miles north of his hometown, in a projected tune-up for a much-anticipated showdown with Andre Ward, possibly on Nov. 19.

"I've wanted this for a long time, since I won my first belt," Kovalev said. "But we didn't because we didn't have the opportunity to do it. Right now, the opportunity came and we're using it. I'll stay in Russia after the fight, in the summertime, spend time with my family and friends. It's a very good opportunity to do this fight and prepare for the November fight against Andre Ward."

But there's more to the journey than the fight.

He's going home for Hope.

Hope is what his mother's name, Nadezhda, means.

"She has a heart condition," Kovalev said. "I think she needs surgery. I just want to get her somewhere where she can get better medical help. In Moscow, maybe. Somewhere."

Visa issues have prevented his mom from traveling to the United States, he said. However, she was able to travel to Canada for his rematch victory over Pascal in Montreal. The ruthless Russian also happens to be a good son ready to fight in any way he can for an ailing mom.

Nearly three months before the Chilemba fight, it was hard to know whether that would create any additional pressure on him for a rare fight in his home country.

"I believe the pressure is already on him," Chilemba said during a conference call from South Africa before trainer Buddy McGirt joined him there for training camp. "He is fighting at home. He needs to show his home people what he is made of. I am happy to go to fight anyone, anywhere, in their backyard, in their own house. I don't care.

"I will give a show. I am gunning for a win. I don't care where we are fighting. I don't care what Kovalev is made of. We know his weaknesses and we know his strengths. I am going to beat him in his own town."

In fact, home will be an unusual setting for Kovalev, whose pro career has been built on fighting and winning on the other guy's turf. He made his pro debut in Greensboro, North Carolina, which is known more for grits than caviar.

Kovalev left Russia in 2009 for veteran trainer Don Turner's North Carolina gym out of frustration at what he calls a corrupt amateur system. As a member of the Russian National Team, he had a reported record of 195-18, including losses to Matt Korobov and Artur Beterbiev.

Seven years ago, Korobov and Beterbiev were probably better known in Russia. Both represented their country at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, each losing before the medal rounds. Since then, they, like Kovalev, have embarked on pro careers in North America. Korobov is 25-1 with 14 KOs as a middleweight. Beterbiev,

Kovalev (pictured here fighting Jean Pascal) will return to the arena where his punches killed Roman Simakov.

mentioned as a potential Kovalev foe last year, is 9-0, all by knockout, as a light heavyweight.

They're good and might get better. In terms of international celebrity and income potential, however, Kovalev (29-0-1, 26 KOs) comes home better-known, more celebrated and a lot more feared than Korobov or Beterbiev or any other Russian fighter.

A sure sign of Russia's growing awareness of him is in the promotional partnership that brought the July 11 fight to his old neighborhood. Kovalev promoter Kathy Duva of Main Events struck a deal with Igor Altushkin, founder of the Russian Copper Company, who agreed to underwrite the Monday-night title fight as part of an international trade fair. According to Forbes, Altushkin has a net worth of $1.6 billion.

"He put up the money to make Sergey's dream come true," Kovalev manager Egis Klimas said. "It's not just about Russia. It's another huge explosion for Sergey around the world."

A challenge, perhaps, is in taking a trip that a North Carolina author said should never be attempted. Thomas Wolfe warned about the perils of going home. You never can, Wolfe wrote in what has become an oft-repeated line.

For Kovalev, the journey includes potential for a further complication. He'll fight Chilemba at Ekaterinburg's DIVS Sport Palace, the same arena where his opponent, Roman Simakov, died three days after a Dec. 5, 2011, fight from injuries sustained in losing a seventh-round stoppage. Kovalev, who offered to give the Simakov family his purse, has been reluctant to talk about it ever since.

"Stop, stop, stop," he said in Los Angeles on April 23 when the inevitable was asked all over again during a news conference to announce the Chilemba bout. "I already forgot everything, you know. Life is good. We're going to do our job."

But a question lingers about whether Kovalev will be affected, perhaps haunted, by what happened nearly five years ago in the same arena. He wouldn't be the first boxer

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THE ALIEN
MAIN EVENTS
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México

'He made me better. Gennady (Golovkin) was the one who forced me to get better. Nobody else.' - Sergey Kovalev

plagued by doubts left from a ring death caused by the punches he threw. By the damage he inflicted.

Duva said she spoke to Kovalev and Klimas about it when she realized where the Chilemba bout would happen. She said both fighter and manager told her they were OK with the site and that they had moved on.

Nevertheless, the question will be there at the opening bell. Kovalev's best – perhaps only – answer will be delivered as it always has been: by his calculated array of punches. An impressive victory might end it, once and for all.

Until July 11, however, that tragic moment is an inescapable part of the Kovalev reputation. It's a reference point – a reason he's called ruthless and a reason he's so feared. Chilemba knows about it, but he believes he'll be facing a different fighter.

"Whatever happened at that time is not what's going to happen now," said Chilemba (24-3-2, 10 KOs).

Kovalev's path from an impoverished kid in a factory town in the old Soviet Union to an amateur in what appeared to be a rigged system to a fledgling pro on forgettable cards in the American South to HBO fame is a compelling story about street smarts, instinct, a work ethic, athletic skill, defiance, luck and – yeah – a streak of ruthlessness.

Kovalev, now 33, can remember what the days were like before the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. There was the hammer, sickle and food on almost every table.

"Even my dog could eat," Kovalev said. "But then the USSR broke up and there were no more sweets. The cookies were gone."

Kovalev was only 9 years old but he knew even then to look for a way out. He said he found it in a gym and a coach who kept him coming back for another round.

He had skill and power but none of the connections that could get him to the Olympics. Yet the power was enough for him to get noticed by promoters and eventually Klimas, who helped him move to the U.S. for his pro debut. But it didn't take long for him to go stale against mediocre sparring partners and opposition. He needed bigger challenges.

"I push me, I push myself," he said.

So he picked up and moved west, across the country to Los Angeles where he wound up in the nearby mountains of Big Bear at the same gym as Gennady Golovkin, the feared middleweight who grew in the Kazakhstani city of Karaganda, about 765 miles south of Kopeysk. Kovalev sparred with GGG.

"Three times a week," Kovalev said. "He made me better. Gennady was the one who forced me to get better. Nobody else."

There's always been talk that Kovalev left The Summit Gym and joined trainer John David Jackson because he didn't get along with Golovkin trainer Abel Sanchez. Kovalev doesn't deny that. But he said business dictated the move.

"Abel got money from Gennady," Kovalev said. "He didn't get money from me. I understand that."

But he also suggests that he left the often outspoken Sanchez because he wanted more independence, more freedom to make his own choices.

"I want to be free," said the Russian, who might be a ruthless fighter because he knows what it's like not to be. RING

Kovalev's biggest victory was over Bernard Hopkins (pictured in the far corner).

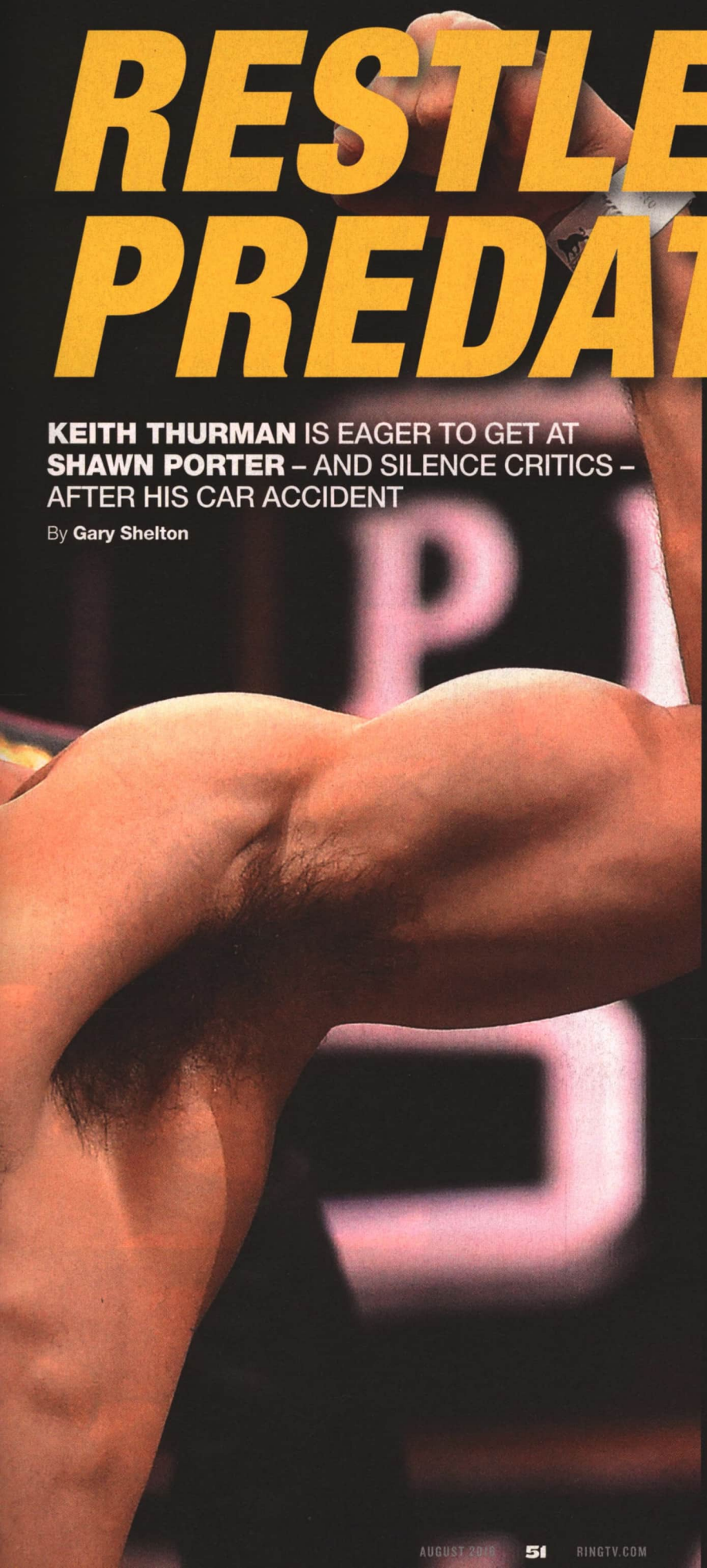
SERGEY KOVALEV VS. ISSAC CHILEMBA
When: July 11 • Where: DIVS, Ekaterinburg, Russia
Division: Light heavyweight (for Kovalev's IBF, WBA and WBO titles) • TV: HBO

A victory over Shawn Porter would put the career of Keith Thurman (pictured) back on track.

RESTLESS PREDATOR

KEITH THURMAN IS EAGER TO GET AT **SHAWN PORTER** – AND SILENCE CRITICS – AFTER HIS CAR ACCIDENT

By **Gary Shelton**



The heavy bags hang unpunched, waiting for his return. The gloves are put away, lest they become covered with dust.

In a spartan, pale yellow gym in south St. Petersburg, Florida, Keith Thurman skips across the ring just for a few strides, as if to remind his body what it used to feel like. But there are no lights, no bell, no opponent. In this brief shadowboxing session, the part of the shadow is being played by Thurman, a man whose career had hit the pause button. The doubts about him resurfaced. It was as if after 20 years in the ring, after winning a version of the welterweight title, after being the Premier Boxing Champions Fighter of the Year, he had taken a step backward.

Because of the accident. Because of that darned accident.

"Have I done all the things you want to see me do in my career?" Thurman asked that day in the gym. "Most likely not. This Shawn Porter fight is necessary. There are more things necessary for me in my career to make a big statement and a big impact and a lasting impact in this beautiful division. This isn't how we wanted things to play out."

Thurman has a chance to restore order to his life and career when he fights Porter on June 25 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn. They were scheduled to meet on March 12 but the fight was postponed because of the events of Feb. 22.

It was a rainy day, Thurman

remembers, when he was driving on an access road and hit a patch of water. His Shelby GT hydroplaned, spun out of control and careened into another car.

"I was in Florida, but I felt like I was driving on ice," Thurman says. "It was like I was going in slow motion. The airbag did most of the damage. I'll tell you, a lot of fighters wish they could hit that hard. It was like I was hit by a whopping overhand right, like more than one. It was like getting hit by Diego Chaves."

He stood there, looking at his damaged car. He was hurt but not so badly that he had to go to the hospital. He thought he would be fine.

The next day, during training, Thurman's neck locked up. Whiplash, doctors told him. His fight with Porter had to be postponed.

That opened the door for the doubters.

Suddenly there were whispers that Thurman had built his record against old guys, that he was more talk than walk, that he really hadn't done that much. Some even doubted he had been injured. Kenny Porter, Shawn's father and trainer, said he wanted to see proof that the accident had actually happened.

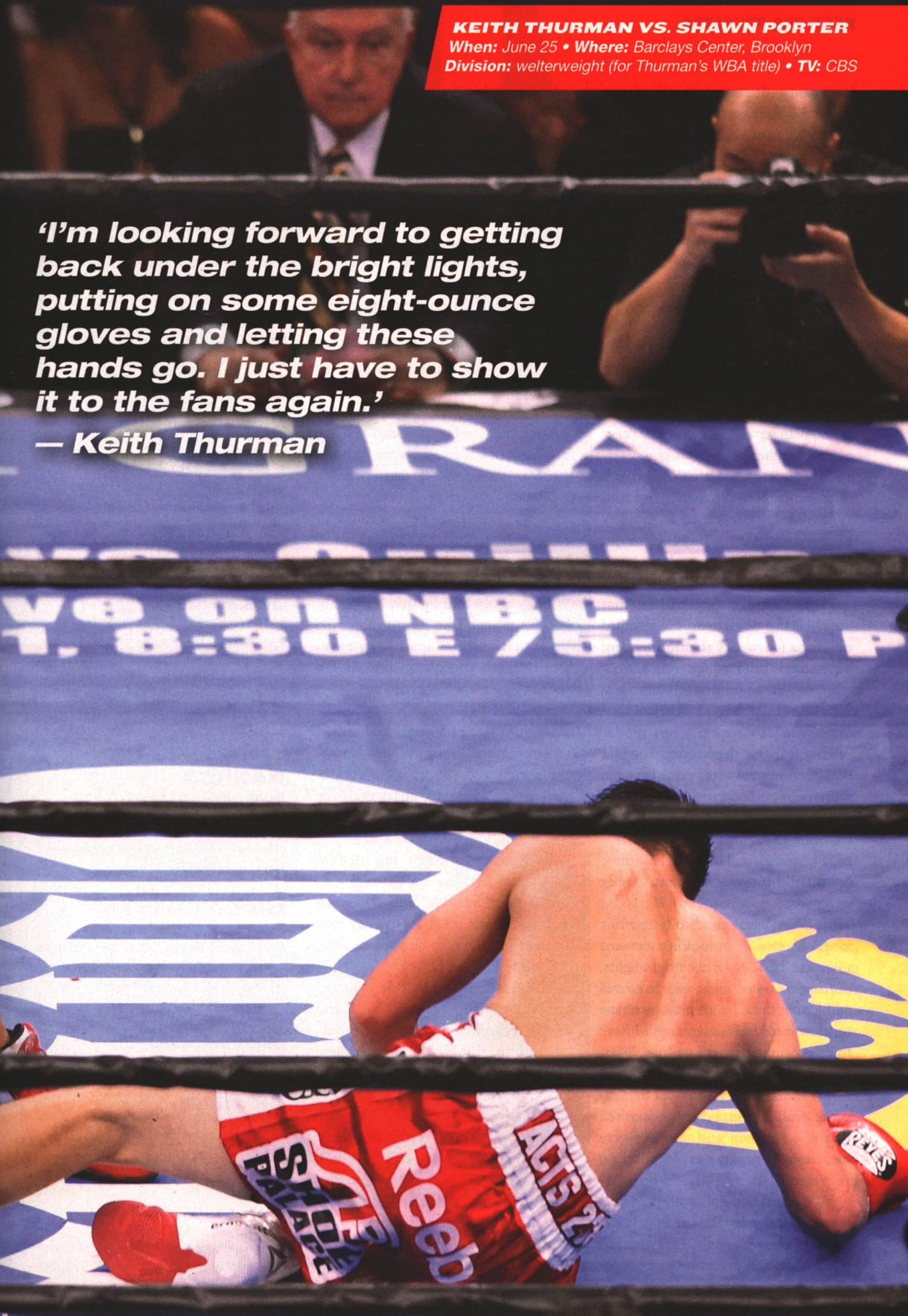
Thurman leans back and listens to the criticism. He shrugs. What would he say to his critics?

"Enjoy it," he says, the annoyance clear in his voice. "I could care less about your emotions and your feelings. It is what it is. I've got a statement of $13,500 in damages to my car. Look, I'm a professional athlete. I've done this job for 20 years. I've never had a job besides boxing. If I want to fight, and I don't want to fight Shawn Porter, I'll pick another f---ing fight."

Thurman's voice levels off. He shrugs again.

"If I'm a critic of myself, and

Thurman has dominated opponents – including Robert Guerrero (on the canvas) – but hasn't had a defining victory.



KEITH THURMAN VS. SHAWN PORTER
When: June 25 • **Where:** Barclays Center, Brooklyn
Division: welterweight (for Thurman's WBA title) • **TV:** CBS

'I'm looking forward to getting back under the bright lights, putting on some eight-ounce gloves and letting these hands go. I just have to show it to the fans again.'
— Keith Thurman

I want to downgrade all of my accomplishments, then the only guy I've beaten who was in the Top 10 was Robert Guerrero. Chaves is in the Top 10 now but he wasn't when I beat him. I think Guerrero was No. 8 and Porter is currently No. 6. I look forward to fighting one more time before the end of the year against someone in the Top 10.

"I'm looking forward to beating Danny Garcia. That would be two undefeated boxers going against each other and it would give me a chance to add one more belt. I made that statement a while back. Two belts would help separate me from the other boxers out there."

The division's history is a rich one: From Henry Armstrong and Sugar Ray Robinson to Sugar Ray Leonard and Floyd Mayweather Jr., the welterweights have always had significant star power in boxing.

Might Thurman someday be in that class? He has work to do. He resumed training a few weeks after the accident but had not resumed sparring a week after that, at the time of this interview. Still, he insisted, he had plenty of time to prepare for Porter.

This will be the second longest that Thurman has ever gone between fights. He missed all of 2011, going 15 months between fights. This time it will be 11 months. Heck, there have been times when Thurman had three fights in 11 months. Yeah, he's ready to hit someone again.

"It doesn't feel good to be off this long," he said. "I'm looking forward to getting back under the bright lights, putting on some eight-ounce gloves and letting these hands go. I just have to show it to the fans again. All I have to do is continue what I've done. What a fighter needs is continuous success. That's what made Mayweather so successful, continued success, when you win and win and win and give them nothing negative except how you beat them. ...

"We could talk about all negatives they want to say about everyone, Floyd all the way down. Everyone has a fan base and everyone has people who aren't big fans yet. They have reasons and doubts but it's my job just to perform and keep showcasing my skills and talents."

Thurman grins. "I just want to make it difficult for you writers to put me in a box and say, 'Keith Thurman is this' or 'Keith Thurman is that.'"

What is Thurman? He's a fighter, dressed in robes and raised in the ring.

"I have the will to die in the ring," Thurman said last year. "The one thing I fear the most is that the referee would wave his hands at any point in my fight if I am conscious. I fear that a referee somehow in some scenario will overstep his boundaries. I'm more of old school. If two men are fighting, someone should end up getting hurt."

That's another reason that Thurman believes he had no choice in postponing the fight. The sport is too hard, too brutal, for a wounded boxer to enter the ring.

He is a cerebral fighter, Thurman. Ask his trainer, Dan Birmingham, the thing that sets him apart from most, and he'll tell you it's his insight. He usually knows what's coming ... and from where.

Want to talk philosophy? Thurman is your man. Want to talk world religions? Same thing. Want to talk about why fans pick apart even the very best of fighters? He can talk about that, too.

"It's always been my dream to accomplish as much as I can accomplish," he said. "Nobody's going to stop me but me. I always say this: I've got 12 rounds to hit you one time. The odds are in my favor.

"I feel like a professor or a doctor, someone who is well acquainted with speed, technique, footwork, stamina, angles. I'm thinking about all these forms of attack at a rapid pace every single round."

Porter has an idea of what Thurman is capable of. They sparred more than once several years ago. Thurman remembers Porter as a shorter fighter, physical and "a little jumpy." He doesn't think Porter's defense was particularly good.

That's why the notion that Thurman

THURMAN'S RESUME

WBA welterweight titleholder Keith Thurman has faced solid boxers in his last eight fights. Each had his strengths and weaknesses. Here's a look.

LUIS COLLAZO

Result / date: TKO 7 / July 11, 2015
Plus / minus: Collazo was a wily veteran who had knocked out Victor Ortiz in 2014. / He was a shopworn 34-year-old who was two fights removed from a one-sided loss to Amir Khan.

ROBERT GUERRERO

Result / date: UD 12 / March 7, 2015
Plus / minus: Guerrero was a resilient veteran with titles in two divisions. / He was a small welterweight who had been in many wars, including one against Yoshihiro Kamegai in his previous fight.

LEONARD BUNDU

Result / date: UD 12 / Dec. 13, 2014
Plus / minus: Bundu was undefeated and coming off a victory over a solid Frankie Gavin. / He had a thin resume overall and was taking an enormous step up against Thurman.

JULIO DIAZ

Result / date: TKO 3 / April 26, 2014
Plus / minus: Diaz drew with Shawn Porter (before losing a rematch) and gave Amir Khan trouble. / He was a small welterweight who hadn't won a fight in 19 months when he fought Thurman.

JESUS SOTO KARASS

Result / date: TKO 9 / Dec. 14, 2013
Plus / minus: Soto Karass was as rugged as they come and had just beaten Andre Berto. / He was only 4-5 in his previous nine official fights, an indication of his limitations.

DIEGO CHAVES

Result / date: KO 10 / July 27, 2013
Plus / minus: Chaves was a crafty, legitimate 147-pounder who had never lost a fight when he fought Thurman. / He dominated a long list of so-so opponents.

JAN ZAVECK

Result / date: UD 12 / March 9, 2013
Plus / minus: Zaveck had built a reputation as a tough, solid fighter in Europe and was a legitimate welterweight. / His limited all-around ability was no match for Thurman.

CARLOS QUINTANA

Result / date: TKO 4 / Nov. 24, 2012
Plus / minus: Quintana was a good fighter who once outpointed Paul Williams to win the WBO welterweight title. / He was faded by the time he faced Thurman and never fought again.

Thurman has beaten some good fighters but all of them were flawed.

might have fabricated his accident – and his injury – to push back a fight strikes Birmingham as amusing.

"Why?" Birmingham said. "They sparred for 30 rounds and Keith didn't lose a one. Why wouldn't he want to fight?"

Thurman grins. "He's my coach," Thurman said. "Of course he's going to think that. Kenny Porter might be saying the same thing. I think I'm the calmer fighter, though. I remember being able to land some heavy blows but it's been three years."

Once again, the conversation turns to the accident. He was lucky, he says now. He could have been going faster. He could have hit something harder. "If things had been different, I might not be here to talk to you," he said.

In the end, it only put his career on hold. He can still get two fights in this year and then he's back on schedule. On one hand, he seems unhurried. On the other, there is this: "Say what you want but I haven't picked up a paycheck this year."

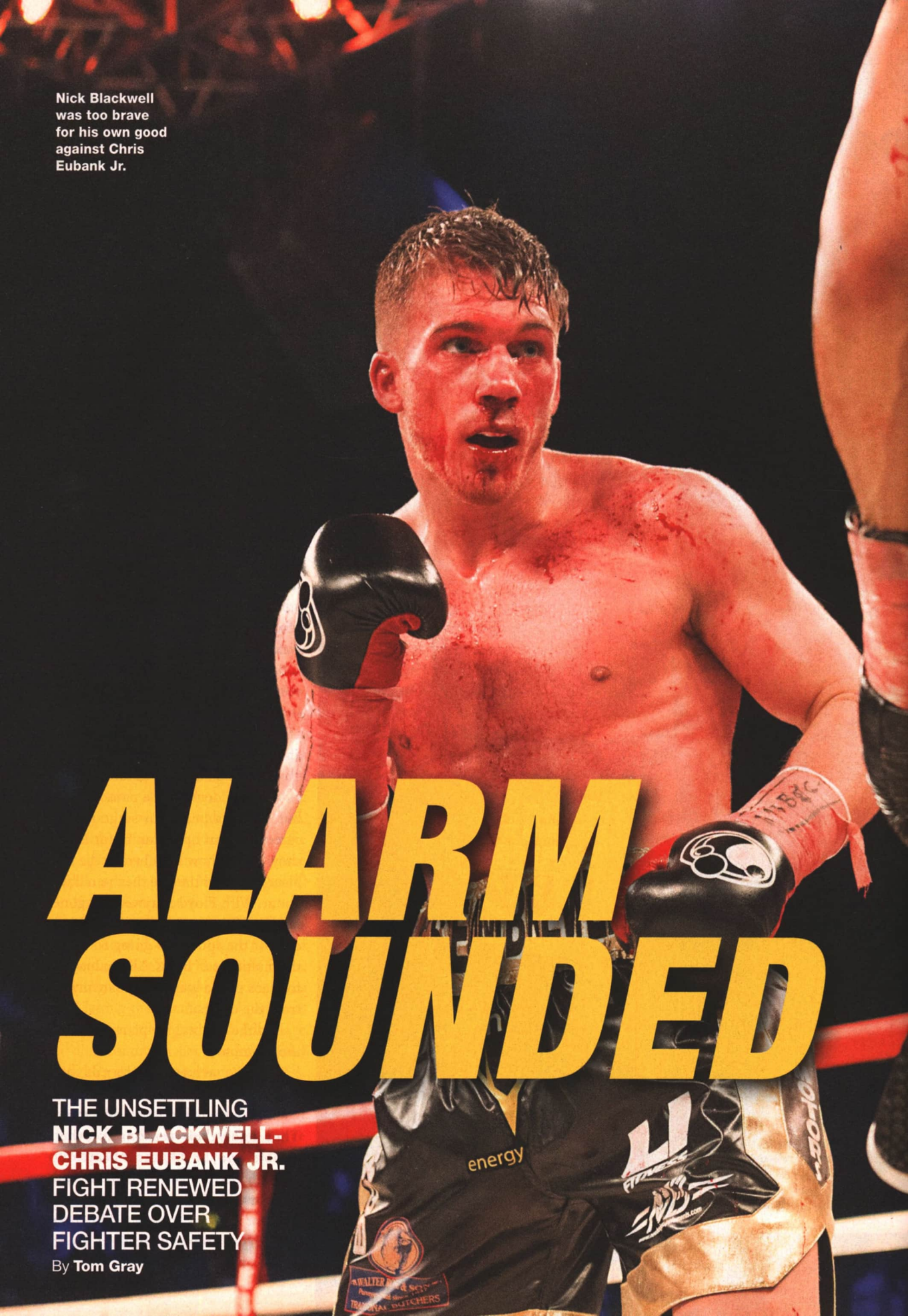
"At the end of the day, I gave you guys something to talk about, something to be interested in," he said about the accident. "I don't worry about it. I just look forward to being able to put on another great show.

"The accident hit the pause button but this is a beautiful stage (in his career). It's an opportunity for me to show people how I got here in the first place, why I'm the one they're talking about. With Floyd Mayweather gone, instead of the focus being on the cash cow of the sport, it's going to be on the multitude of fights. All I'm looking forward to is a way to separate myself from the others."

And the doubts? He plans to knock those out, too.

"That's what my hands are supposed to do," Thurman said. "That's why I don't pay any mind. They have their reasons for their doubts. Maybe I haven't beaten up enough people yet. If I do my job right, it will start to dissipate."

After that, of course, Thurman will drive toward his next fight. Slowly. RING

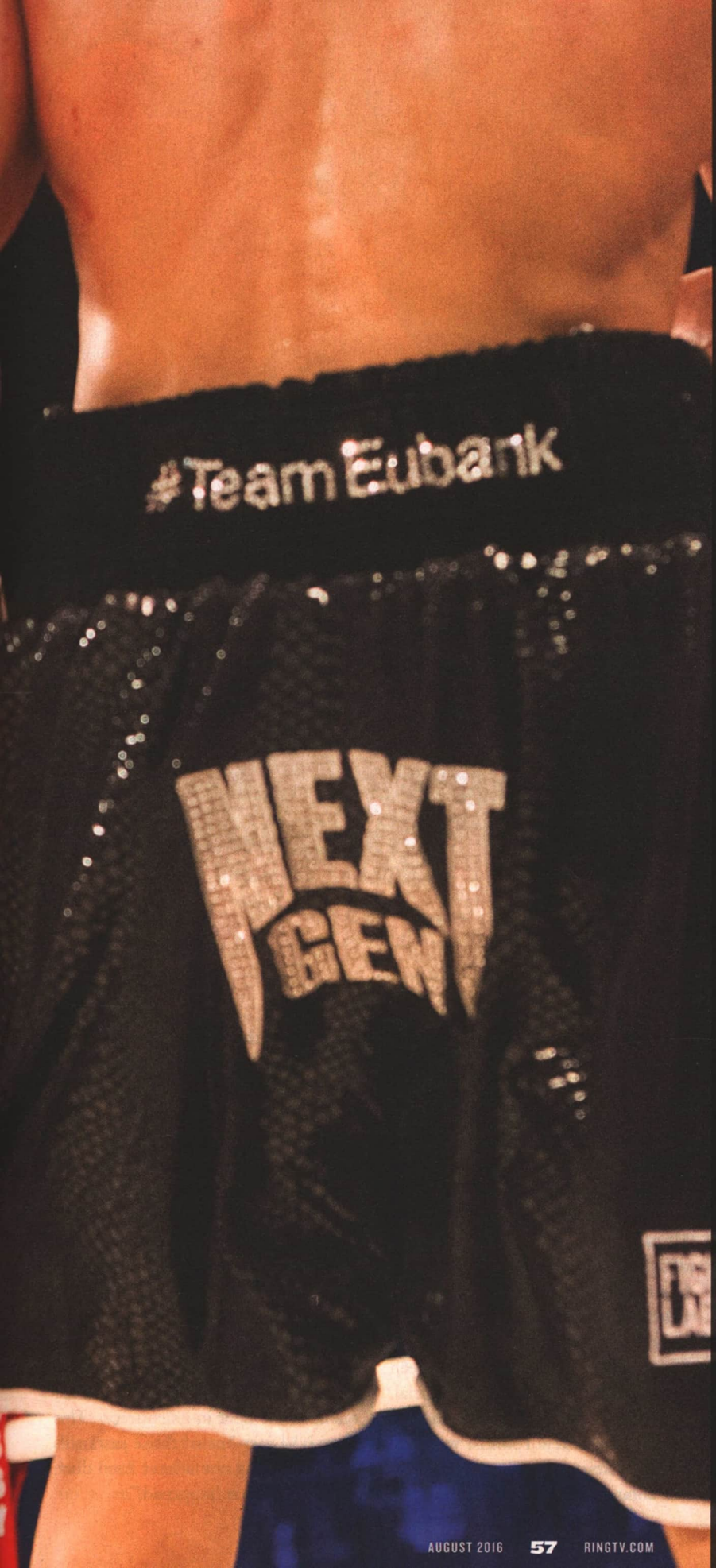


Nick Blackwell was too brave for his own good against Chris Eubank Jr.

ALARM SOUNDED

THE UNSETTLING **NICK BLACKWELL-CHRIS EUBANK JR.** FIGHT RENEWED DEBATE OVER FIGHTER SAFETY

By **Tom Gray**



On March 26, 2016, Nick Blackwell lost his British middleweight title to Chris Eubank Jr. by 10th-round technical knockout in London. Referee Victor Loughlin, following consultation with a ringside physician, deemed Blackwell unable to continue due to his sight being hampered by a large hematoma over the left eye.

Shortly after the contest had been stopped, Blackwell's health deteriorated. Oxygen was administered and the stricken fighter was taken from the ring on a stretcher. Upon arrival at a London hospital, doctors found a small bleed inside the skull and placed him in a medically induced coma to give the swelling adequate time to subside.

The news sent shockwaves through the sport as referee Loughlin, Blackwell's trainer Gary Lockett and boxing itself came under fierce scrutiny from rampaging British media members, many of whom felt the bout should have been stopped sooner.

Should it have been? Do officials – executives from commissions, doctors, referees and trainers – need to do more to protect fighters? Those directly responsible for minimizing the dangers tried to answer these questions.

"The vast majority of people within the trade that I have spoken to are of the opinion that Blackwell was fighting back and that's why this bout continued into the 10th round," said Robert Smith, the general secretary of the British Boxing Board of Control.

"Victor Loughlin is one the best officials, not only in U.K. but in the world, and this was a British title bout where the champion was putting up a fight. Gary Lockett is not only an experienced trainer, he is someone who takes his responsibilities very seriously. He is a compassionate individual who treats the fighters like family. I have spoken to both men and I am completely satisfied with how they went about their business."

Blackwell did not require surgery. The sedatives he had been

administered were gradually reduced and he awoke from his coma after seven days. At the time this article was written, in late April, he was due to leave the hospital and had voluntarily called time on his career.

Jack Reiss has been a professional referee in the state of California for almost 18 years, working as third man in world title bouts involving such titleholders as Gennady Golovkin, Danny Garcia and Leo Santa Cruz. He also oversaw thousands of incidents involving trauma during his time as a firefighter and emergency medical technician in Los Angeles.

Reiss supported Loughlin's handling of the Blackwell-Eubank bout.

"Victor getting the doctor involved due to (Blackwell's) eye swelling was fantastic," he said. "There was no way to get him out because of his condition because that kid always wanted to be there. Using alternate tools to bring about the stoppage in another way was actually very intelligent.

"If a fighter is taking a lot of damage and he's still fighting back then I ask myself a series of questions," added Reiss. "Can he mathematically win on the scorecards? Is he a puncher and does he have a significant puncher's chance? Does he have visual physical damage and what is going on behind that damage? Does the fighter really want to be there, or is he just fighting to survive? The final question I ask myself is, what is best for the sport?

Reiss continued: "A referee has to use everything at his disposal. I'll visit the corner and say, 'Hey, your fighter doesn't look too good. You know him better than I do. What do you think?' I speak with the doctors for their opinion. Even the fans will be able to sense my concern. After that, when I pull the plug on a fight, it's not a surprise to anyone."

Dr. Margaret Goodman is a Las Vegas neurologist who has worked around combat sports for over two decades. She was a ringside physician for hundreds of contests in Nevada between 1994 and 2005. She later founded the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association (VADA).

When informed of Jack Reiss' diligence in liaising with ringside colleagues and medical professionals, Goodman was quick to endorse those standards. "Excellent. That is exactly what I'd be looking for and this should be common practice among all officials," she said. "Sometimes officials can be caught in a vortex, basing their decision on how the fighter is after each round as opposed to assessing their overall condition. That's why communication between the physician and the referee is crucial. Typically you would want that to evolve over a few rounds, with the ring physician checking the fighter and communicating his or her findings. Usually if those two have worked together before they will know what the other is thinking."

Goodman hadn't viewed the Blackwell-Eubank bout but insisted on doing so before she was interviewed for this article. Unfamiliar with the fighters themselves, she also asked a series of questions relating to each fighter's respective skill level and how active they had been coming into that fight. "Trust me, I can be extremely critical but, for me, the ring physician, the referee and the trainer did a good job," said Goodman after viewing the fight in its entirety. "This is maybe just one of those instances where nothing could have been done to prevent what happened."

Chris Eubank Sr., his son's trainer, said in the corner that he didn't understand why the referee hadn't stopped the fight and told Eubank Jr. to focus on Blackwell's body in an effort to end the fight.

And what happened could have been a whole lot worse.

On Dec. 5, 2011, in Ekaterinburg, Russia, acclaimed boxing coach Abel Sanchez worked the corner of a rising light heavyweight prospect named Sergey Kovalev. The opponent for the future unified champion was 27-year-old Roman Simakov, a fellow Russian whose life was tragically cut short following a bout that bore eerie similarities to Blackwell-Eubank.

"Sergey was hitting him at will for the first five rounds but Roman was always firing," recalled Sanchez, who trains fighters at The Summit in Big Bear, California. "Initially Sergey held back but he was forced to open up when his opponent went for the knockout in the sixth. The fight ended in the seventh when Roman suddenly slid down the ropes (toward the canvas) and the referee waved it off. Tragically, he died three days later. I wasn't in the other corner but it's possible that there were no signs whatsoever that this was going to happen. We aren't mind readers and all we can do is hope we make the right decision in these circumstances."

Simakov, like Blackwell, did what he had been trained to do; he fought like a warrior and kept himself in the game. A championship fighter may not win any of the first six rounds but there's six more to go, which is ample time to turn things around. There is a fine line between reasonable and excessive risk, however. And making the correct decision is an art form that is impossible to master without the use of a crystal ball.

Sanchez, who now trains IBF and WBA middleweight titleholder Gennady Golovkin, has had to make many tough calls. "There are times when a coach doesn't want to throw in the towel in case they make a fighter mad but that shouldn't even come into it," he said. "I worked the corner of (welterweight) Freddie Lawson in Florida last year and his jaw was broken somewhere around the sixth round (by Kevin Bizier). I let it go initially because he was competitive but I could see the injury getting worse so I stopped it in the 10th. Freddie was upset but that's my job. We've spoken since and he understands but one thing a coach must make clear to his athletes is that he has the final say and that he is in charge of his safety."

Despite referees, doctors and trainers doing the best they can, boxing commissions have a duty to ensure that safety measures are in place before a punch is even thrown. The reality, however, is that there is no consistency.

The standard of care in the U.K. has changed vastly since the BBBofC's inception in 1929. A medical committee was introduced in 1950 but harsh lessons had to be learned before it achieved the high standards that are in place today. A key turning point was Michael Watson sustaining a serious brain injury following a 12th-round stoppage loss to, ironically, Chris Eubank Sr. in September 1991. All parties connected with that contest did their job well; the problem was Watson's immediate aftercare. The ring was invaded. No oxygen was on hand. The wounded fighter was transported to the wrong hospital. By

Referee Jack Reiss believes that constant communication with the corners and doctors is essential for fighter safety.

'Overall ... boxing is not doing everything possible to keep fighters safe.' — Referee Jack Reiss

the time Watson was treated, his brain had been starved of oxygen for almost 30 minutes.

He survived and successfully sued the board for negligence, receiving an undisclosed sum.

In the wake of this incident, mandatory safety protocol was introduced and Robert Smith outlined some of the measures that are now in place. "A small show has to have at least one anesthetist, one working doctor and one ambulance on standby," said Smith, who boxed professionally himself. "At a larger show, like the one headlined by Blackwell and Eubank Jr., we would have two anesthetists, two working doctors and two ambulances. The fastest route to an appropriate hospital is known well in advance.

"Also, if we get an application for a British boxer to fight abroad, then we try to make sure that the country in question has safety provisions that are in line with ours or very close to ours. If you're talking about places like California, Nevada or Germany, then you're happy, but there are some countries in the world where you need to do a bit of investigating. Our priority is to make sure that, God forbid, if a fighter gets hurt, they're looked after."

Reiss conducts seminars on fighter safety for judges and referees, one of which is entitled, "The Theory of Stopping Fights – A Scientific Approach." Reiss believes that, despite progress, there is still plenty of room to grow. "The California commission is always improving," said Reiss. "Right now, each fight has to have a paramedic rescue, with transport capability, who can manage an airway. This is in case a person stops breathing and we also go through an emergency evacuation plan at the arena, on the off-chance that is required.

"Overall, though, boxing is not doing everything possible to keep fighters safe. It's unrealistic but I would like to see a single regulatory body that trains officials properly, because right now there are places that will allow you to become a referee if you know someone important, and that is absolutely ridiculous."

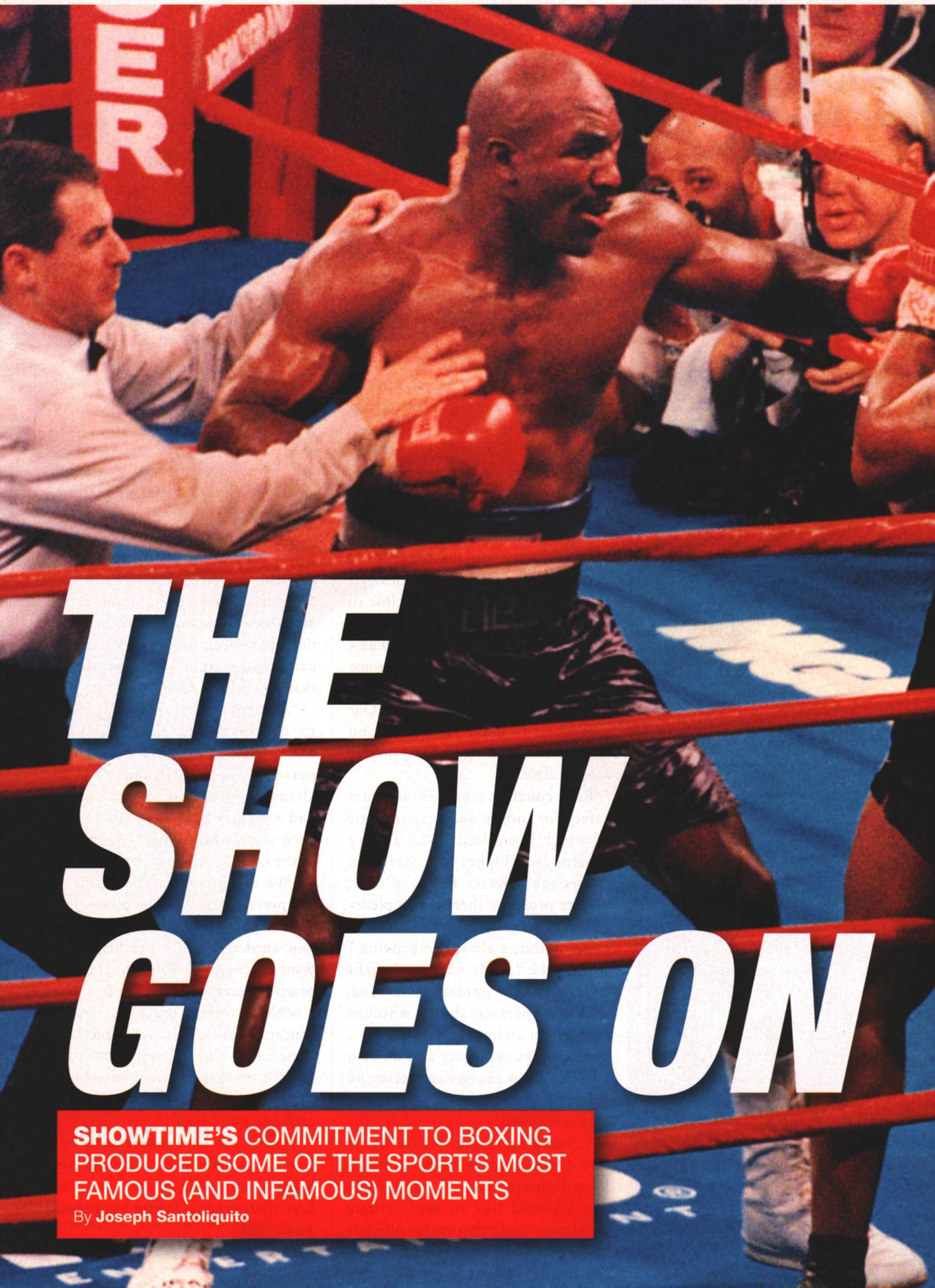
Boxers must also protect themselves at all times before clocking in for paid work. Making weight as safely as possible and rehydrating in the proper manner should come with the territory now. Fighters are also advised to be careful when taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories because such products thin the blood and make one more susceptible to brain bleeds. The New York State Athletic Commission has enforced a ban on such substances, aspirin and ibuprofen among them, for seven days prior to a contest and advise participants to exercise caution if they are using this medication when actively sparring.

Dr. Goodman placed emphasis on a fighter's physical preparation. For a 12-round championship bout, there are athletes who will put themselves through a torturous 12-week training camp and a significant portion of that time will be spent sparring.

"It's rare for any fighter to disclose what happened in training but I can tell you from personal, sad experience that in almost every instance where we've had a fighter pass away, there has been some kind of injury sustained in the gym," said Goodman.

"We all know that headgear is not preventative and any punch you take to the head is one less punch you need to take to the head. We want fighters to have healthy training practices and too much sparring is not a healthy training practice. Further education for fighters and trainers on these risks would be very useful and it's also the reasons why I would like an MRI scan to be conducted before each and every bout.

"I may sound conservative but I've been there when a fighter has been taken off life-support and I've been there when a fighter has passed away." RING



THE SHOW GOES ON

SHOWTIME'S COMMITMENT TO BOXING PRODUCED SOME OF THE SPORT'S MOST FAMOUS (AND INFAMOUS) MOMENTS

By **Joseph Santoliquito**

It doesn't get much bigger than the two-fight series between Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson.

David Dinkins Jr. looked over the scene and nodded. There were cracks all over the massive, decades-old concrete bowl that was Azteca Stadium. There were moats and barbed wire to keep unruly fans away from the field. But Dinkins, then Showtime's "Championship Boxing" producer, could work with it.

What Dinkins and Showtime had to somehow figure out was how to squeeze four title fights, headlined by Julio Cesar Chavez's defense of his WBC junior welterweight belt against the rugged Greg Haugen, into four hours.

Everything worked. The equipment was shipped in cargo boxes and reassembled. The fragile political web Don King had spun between several Mexican entities was navigated with aplomb. The fights fell within the allotted time frame. Haugen was brave but not good enough for Chavez, who tore through the American in five rounds before a raucous audience of 132,247 on Feb. 20, 1993.

The production was clean. Everyone was pleased – everyone except King.

"We're looking at each other, happy because everything worked out," said Dinkins, now Showtime's senior vice president and executive producer of Sports and Event Programming. "Then Don starts to have this meltdown. He has the stage manager by the throat and he says to him, 'You tell Dinkins ... ,' using all kinds of words that this was it. He had it. Not that I worked for Don but he thought everybody worked for him. He said that he was going to get me fired and called me all kinds of names that we can't print here.

"Later on, I see Don at the host hotel of the fight and I was curious what spurred his tirade. Don told me he wanted to wish his wife happy birthday and I wouldn't let him do it. I was like, 'That was it?' It gets better. At the time, my father was the mayor of New York City and I get back to New York and see an article in the New York Times: 'Mayor's son and Don King in altercation.' So my mother calls me and asks what happened between me and

Don King. I told her, 'Mom, it's just another day at work.'"

Dinkins and Showtime have made it work for 30 years. What began in trickles here and there, beginning with middleweight world champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler's 11-round destruction of John "The Beast" Mugabi on March 10, 1986, has grown into a torrent. They've survived post-fight tirades, ear bites and last-second controversies to produce more than 12 shows a year.

Those fights have included some of the most memorable of the last 30 years, including Mike Tyson's "Bite Fight" against Evander Holyfield and, in arguably the best fight of the century, Diego Corrales' knockout of Jose Luis Castillo in the 10th round on May 7, 2005.

"Boxing wasn't really that hard of a sell to the network," recalled Dinkins, who was there at the inception of Showtime Boxing. "It's almost a natural fit for premium television. We figured it was a 12-month season, and the rights you have to the major sports are gobbled up by the networks and cable companies. They can commit to those kinds of things. You have to look at what Showtime is. It's a premium television network that sells by giving subscribers something unique that they can't find anywhere else.

"Big-time fights were only residing on premium television or pay-per-view in the mid-1980s. I go back to the days when I was working at ABC and CBS, when we had the Saturday afternoon fights and you had the occasional primetime fight on the network. As the networks moved away from that, there was a void, because I think boxing has sold itself for years. It continues to be the metaphor that people use for all other sports, whether it's something obvious like 'knockout,' or 'went the distance,' or 'underdog,' or 'this is his Rocky moment.' Boxing is part of our culture and boxing has been a socio-economic leader of the underclass, which naturally creates underdogs, heroes – people that you want to root for. There's not a sense of entitlement there. Boxing has its own story, two people fighting for a championship, and people can relate to that."

As Dinkins said, boxing wasn't a hard sell. It just needed a chance and the timing couldn't have been better for Showtime's launch.

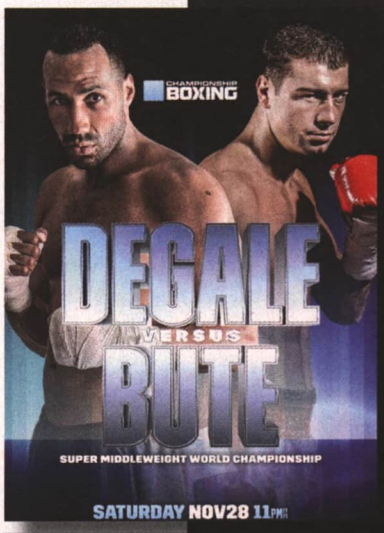
The four kings (Hagler, Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran and Tommy Hearns) were still doing their thing, Tyson was emerging as a phenomenon, Holyfield lurked and Chavez was the king of Mexico.

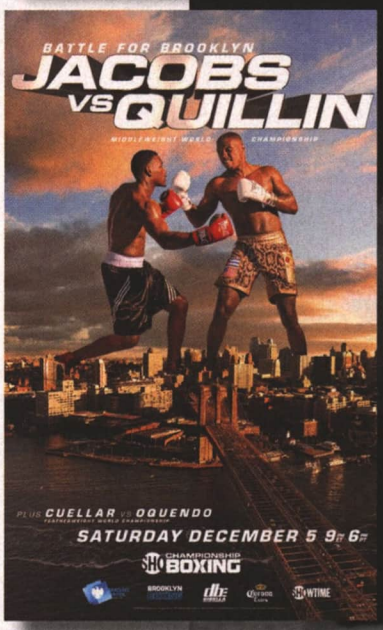
It was never intended to be a one-off.

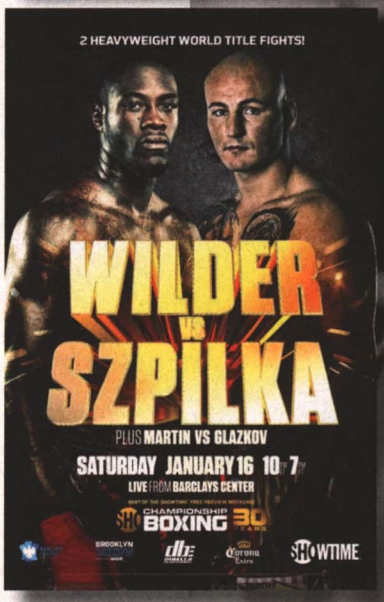
"It was a heck of an idea when it occurred and I wish I could take credit for it but Showtime had approached promoters about it and had worked on a model resembling concerts for entertainers," Dinkins said. "There were natural alliances that happened. We had Thomas Hearns on for several fights and I would say that the homegrown Showtime star was clearly Evander Holyfield. But it's unique how he came along. He was part of the Main Events fighters – Pernell Whitaker, Meldrick Taylor and Mark Breland. Evander was initially overshadowed by them and wound up surpassing all of them."

The event that catapulted the premium network into the big-boy category was the signing of Tyson in December 1990. King opted to leave HBO, which had televised Tyson's fights the previous four years, complaining about color analyst Larry Merchant's questioning of Tyson after he beat Alex Stewart. King demanded to then-HBO Sports President Seth Abraham that Merchant be removed from the HBO telecasts. Abraham said no, so King grabbed his Tyson ball and left for Showtime.

At the time, Tyson was two fights removed from losing to Buster Douglas but was still an attraction, which was a boon for Showtime.





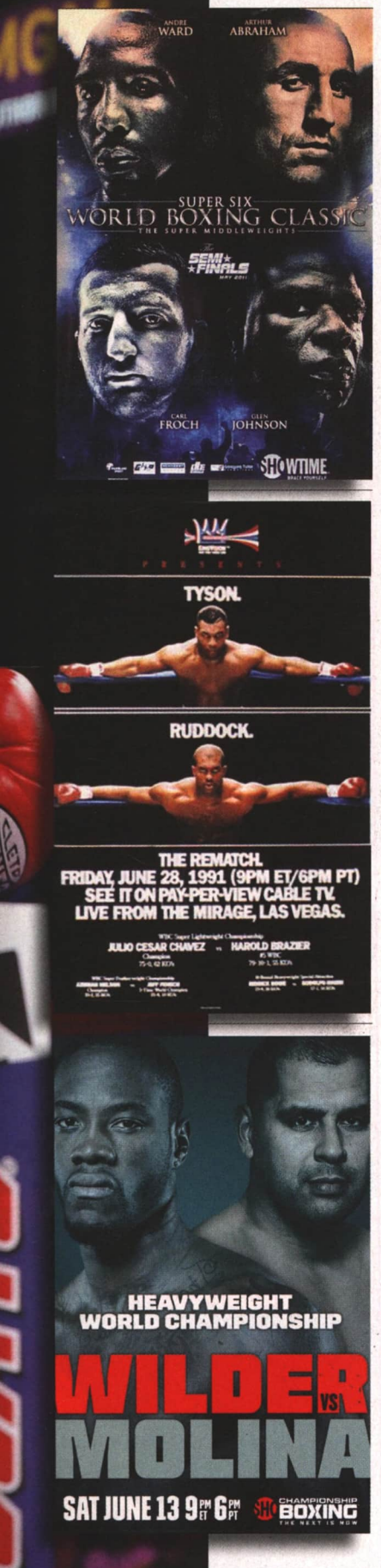


The memorable fight between John Mugabi (left) and Marvin Hagler kicked off Showtime's boxing coverage in 1986.

Showtime shared in the record-setting pay-per-view revenue generated by the Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Manny Pacquiao fight.

MOST APPEARANCES ON SHOWTIME

Julio Cesar Chavez Sr. 19 • **Evander Holyfield** 18 • **Mike Tyson** 16 • **Jeff Lacy** 12 • **Felix Trinidad** 11



After Stewart, Tyson had two major fights with Razor Ruddock and then went to prison for rape. He would return to the network four years later for his second run as heavyweight champ.

Another key to Showtime's success were the contributions made by the late Jay Larkin, who used to market, distribute and produce such renowned worldwide performers as Frank Sinatra, Jay Z, Sting, the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and the Backstreet Boys. He started on the public relations side at Showtime and gradually helped put together its sports department. What's more, Larkin built the brand on a budget that wasn't anywhere near the funds his cable cousins were receiving.

"Jay was able to work this thing and help the vision come to life," Dinkins said. "He had the foresight to bring in Gordon Hall, Richard Keating, Scott Davis ... he really built the operational side, because before Jay there was no infrastructure. He was tasked to get it done and he got it done.

"The company philosophy was a commitment to do this all the way. So when Tyson went inside, Chavez emerged as a star. We were always able to ride the waves and that's a testament to the company's sustainability."

Now that responsibility lies in the hands of Stephen Espinoza, the executive vice president of Showtime Sports. It was Espinoza who made the bold move of securing Floyd Mayweather Jr., the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world at the time, to a lucrative six-fight deal over three years – a contract some in the boxing world doubted would reach its fruition.

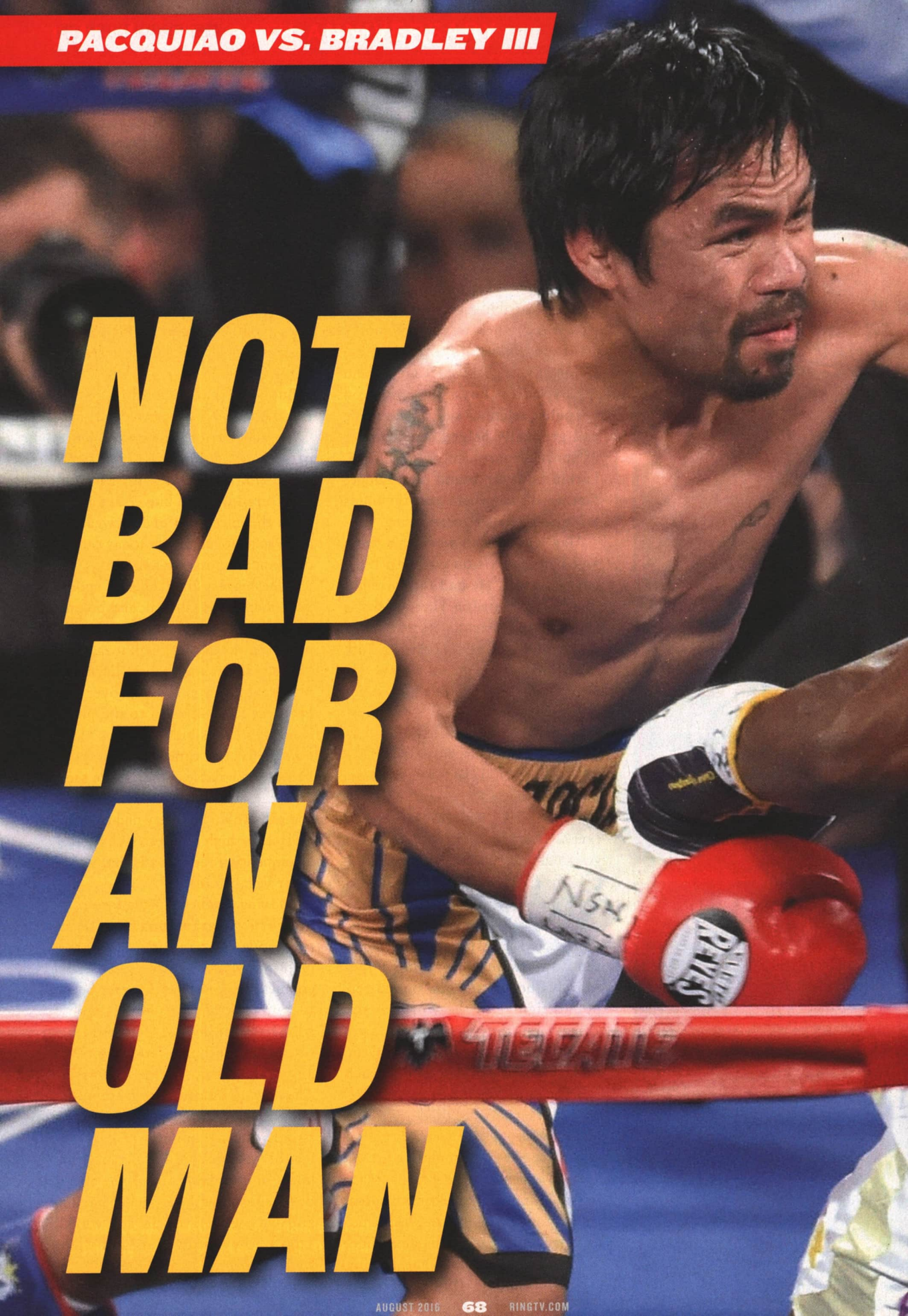
"No one really did think it's a deal that Floyd would complete," Espinoza said. "He not only completed it, he made it a memorable six fights, twice setting all-time pay-per-view records, adding to the long list of A-list names that have appeared on Showtime. We believe that Showtime Boxing is at a great place. The sport itself is at exciting juncture right now, at a place between generations of talent. If you're the NBA, when Magic Johnson and Larry Bird retired, then who comes along? And all of a sudden you have Michael Jordan. We're at the same juncture in boxing. We're seeing Wladimir Klitschko, Manny Pacquiao and Floyd and they are all near or at the end of their careers. ... It's exciting to see who will be the next generation of the sport."

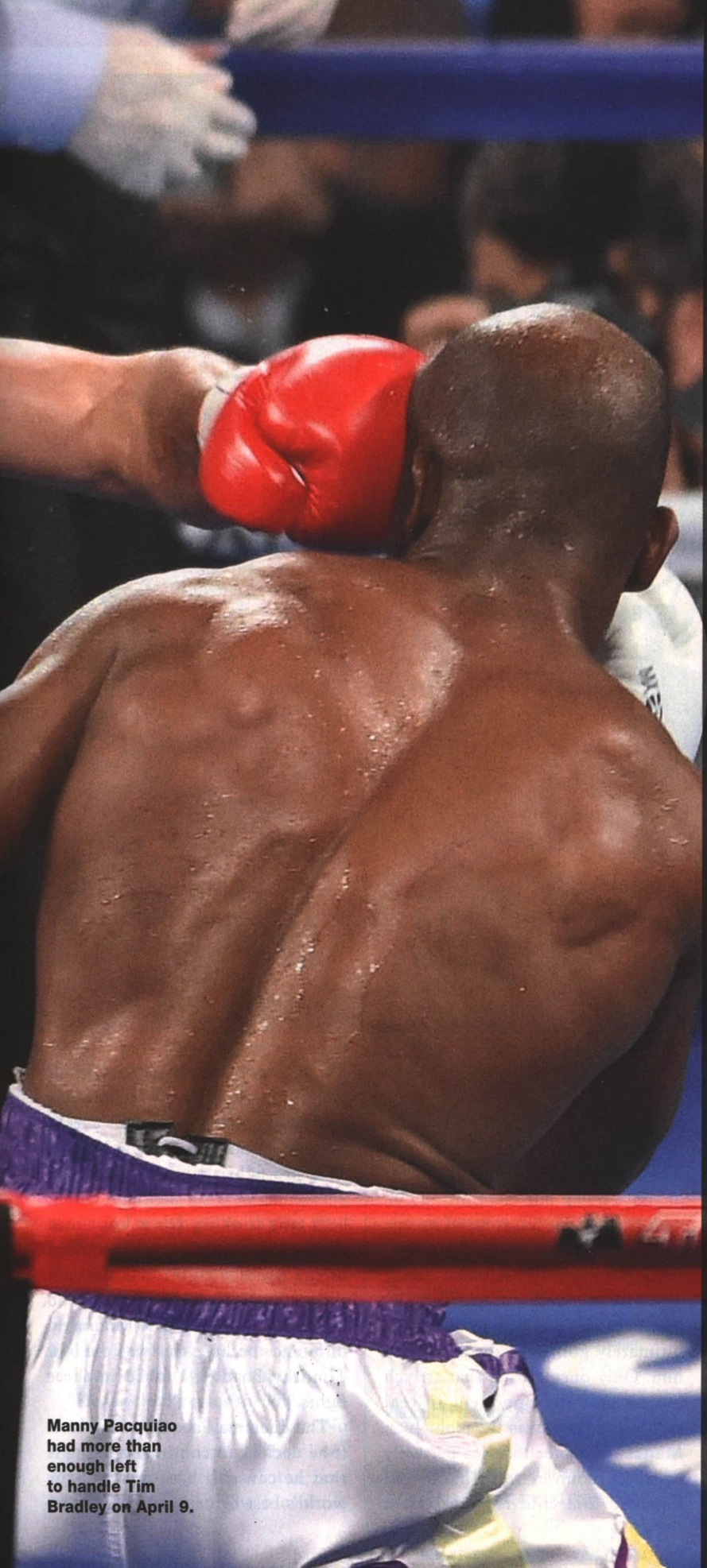
But Showtime, like HBO, ESPN, Fox Sports, NBC Sports and now CBS, faces the continuing challenge of selling the sport. Ali, Tyson, Holyfield, Hagler, Hearns, Leonard and Duran were all universal names. With the exception of Mayweather and Pacquiao, no fighter today carries that kind of crossover appeal.

"The biggest challenge for sports programming in general, and boxing in particular, is the amount of noise in the marketplace," Espinoza said. "It's no secret that sports licensing fees have been exploding over the last decade. It's gotten to the point where ferocious bidding takes place nationally any time a major sport becomes available. What we've seen over the last couple of years is the competition for Saturday night. That's a place for high-level boxing. There's a competition for eyeballs that we've never seen before.

"Boxing has been at the forefront of sports programming at various times. We can't say it's one of the major three or four sports. It's more competitive now than it's ever been. If you look at pure hours, we're probably the leader in providing (more) boxing programming than any other outlet on a regular basis. The key is quality programming. We always believed quality programming speaks for itself. Deontay Wilder did four or five hours of interviews during the Super Bowl, spreading the gospel of boxing and was willing to do the work. That's how boxing wins and what we believe at Showtime." RING

NOT BAD FOR AN OLD MAN





Manny Pacquiao had more than enough left to handle Tim Bradley on April 9.

MANNY PACQUIAO MIGHT BE WISE TO WALK AWAY FOR GOOD AFTER HIS IMPRESSIVE VICTORY OVER TIM BRADLEY

By **Ron Borges**

Age is a relentless warrior. It pursues you quietly at first, lying hidden in the garden of youth for years. Over time it closes in, fighting its battles like Sun Tzu. It always has the high ground.

Age is undefeated, the one force not even nature or unnatural physical gifts can stave off indefinitely. This, really, is the lesson of the Manny Pacquiao-Tim Bradley fight contested April 9 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao fought well that night for a 37-year-old prizefighter with 66 matches on his resume. He fought well for someone who has fought for world titles 22 times at weights ranging from 108 pounds to 154 pounds. He fought better, in fact, than he had just 11 months earlier when he lost a one-sided decision to Floyd Mayweather Jr. in the same venue.

What he did not do, however, was turn back the clock. Pacquiao looked better than he had against Mayweather, to be sure, but he did not look like Pacquiao. At least not like the Manny Pacquiao who became a fistic icon, winning championships in a record eight weight classes and along the way becoming an international phenomenon and one of the best fighters of his time.

Although he outpointed Bradley by a wide margin, winning by identical 116-110 scores (8 rounds to 4) on all three judges' cards, he did not

outpoint Age.

He was not, as his loyal lieges and many media minions tried to suggest, Manny Pacquiao any more. He was Manny Pacquiao less.

Pacquiao landed only 20 total punches over the first three rounds and his overall punching volume shrank from 63 punches per round in the first meeting with Bradley in 2012 to 37 per round in the final installment of their trilogy. That's a 41 percent drop in production on a night when, according to CompuBox statistics at least, Pacquiao threw 439 punches and landed only 122. The latter was only 23 more than Bradley's 99, which calls into question the one-sided nature of the decision. But the power difference between the two was clear in those moments when they did exchange briskly.

In their first fight four years ago, Pacquiao threw 751 punches, a reflection of both the quickness of his hands and the fact that for most of his career he was a high-volume combination puncher. At his height, Pacquiao would rip off five-, six- and seven-punch combinations regularly and they would often land with crushing power and blinding speed. He did nothing like that in his third fight with Bradley and hasn't done it for several years now. Nor will he again. This is just how it is.

Nothing will change if Pacquiao eventually goes back on his promise to retire so he can pursue a Senate seat in the Philippines in May. Another year-long layoff will only allow age to close in a little further on him.

The fight itself actually seemed closer than the judges had it, more a 7-5 contest with many rounds in which neither fighter did much. And, significantly, Pacquiao continued what is now more than six years without a knockout despite twice dropping Bradley. What that has made clear is that while Pacquiao still has admirable hand speed and quickness, his concussive power is gone and his ability to close the show as he once did so spectacularly is bankrupt.

Pacquiao has fought 11 times since he stopped Miguel Cotto in November 2009 and had lost three of those going into his third match with Bradley. He has stopped no one since Cotto.

He did drop overmatched junior welterweight Chris Algieri six times but he couldn't keep him down, ultimately going the distance with him. Only once during that stretch has he had any opponent in real trouble and that was the night Juan Manuel Marquez threw a perfectly executed counter right hand that knocked him cold for more than five minutes as he was moving in for the kill. It was only the second time he'd been counted out in his career, the first coming 12 years ago in his 11th pro fight against an opponent allowed to wear six-ounce gloves.

"I was looking for a knockout in every round," Pacquiao said of the Bradley fight. "He's a very tough fighter and a very good counterpuncher. Teddy Atlas made a difference because this was the best Timothy Bradley I faced in three fights."

The dilemma Pacquiao now faces if he decides to continue fighting is that he can still beat many of the world's best fighters, which includes

NAOKI FUKUDA

Was this Pacquiao's last post-fight celebration?

Bradley. But there are only a handful of opponents with whom he can still make significant money. One is Mayweather and that fight seems highly unlikely in part because Mayweather has no desire to help Pacquiao's promoter, Bob Arum, make more money.

Another is young Terence Crawford but he is just the kind of young lion Pacquiao should avoid. Crawford is hungry, dangerous and a predator in the ring. He's the kind of opponent who retires old champions who come one night too many to the arena.

And any talk of facing middleweight titleholders Canelo Alvarez or Gennady Golovkin, even at a catchweight, seems foolhardy because Pacquiao would be at a distinct size disadvantage against two young fighters in their prime who are strong and, at least in Golovkin's case, carry significant punching power. Pacquiao barely topped 145 against Bradley, proving once again he is more a natural junior welterweight than a welterweight.

Yet boxing is the sport of self-delusion and so, after the fight was over, his handlers insisted it had all been like old times instead of what it really was: a good night for an old timer.

"He's capable of a lot more fast combinations," his Hall of Fame trainer, Freddie Roach, claimed, perhaps sensing what those sliding numbers really were saying and trying to deny them. "His legs are good, his work ethic is great. He hasn't missed a beat. This may be the beginning of bringing back the old Manny Pacquiao. ... It was good to see the old Manny Pacquiao."

"He was looking for the knockout. He hasn't slowed down a bit. No signs of wear and tear. When I see Manny aggressive, that's the best Manny Pacquiao. I saw him smile

REPORT CARD

MANNY PACQUIAO UD 12 TIM BRADLEY
APRIL 9, 2016, MGM GRAND, LAS VEGAS

THE MAIN EVENT

B

Pacquiao won a clear decision but Bradley was competitive, which made for perhaps the most compelling fight of their series.

PACQUIAO

B+

The Pacquiao of old is long gone but he showed enough flashes of his past – including two knockdowns – to win convincingly.

BRADLEY

C+

Bradley was competitive against an opponent who remains one of the best fighters in the world. That's something.

FREDDIE ROACH

Pacquaio's trainer

B+

Pacquiao seemed to be fit and focused in spite of his age and myriad distractions. Kudos to Roach for keeping him on track.

TEDDY ATLAS

Bradley's trainer

B

What more could Atlas do? Bradley was reasonably sharp and motivated but was simply in the ring with a better fighter.

THE JUDGES

A

All three judges scored it the same, 116-110, or eight rounds to four. That reflects what happened in the fight.

ROBERT BYRD

The referee

A

The veteran referee was largely invisible during a clean fight, which is exactly how it's supposed to be.

THE ATMOSPHERE

C

The atmosphere pre-fight was strangely subdued but, by fight time, the fans turned up the energy and volume.

THE UNDERCARD

C+

The undercard included three good performances – by Gilberto Ramirez, Oscar Valdez and Jose Ramirez – but minimal drama.

- Michael Rosenthal

quite a bit. It wasn't a complete comeback but it was a good first step.

"The volume of punches wasn't enough but he's very capable of throwing a lot more combinations, those eight-, nine-, 10-punch combinations. He has the ability to throw a number of punches with his speed. Tonight, he was one, two, three and maybe four. There's still room for improvement but at moments tonight he looked better than he has in a long time."

The latter was certainly true but the emphasis is on the word *moments*. Pacquiao did indeed have moments, such as when he landed a solid left hook that sent Bradley sprawling onto his back in the ninth round during an exchange of punches at close quarters. But for far too much of the fight Pacquiao was himself throwing only one or two punches and not controlling the ring against an opponent he well knew couldn't hurt him. That is not the old Manny Pacquiao. It's an old Manny Pacquiao.

Although Bradley is a skilled boxer and top welterweight, he has only 13 knockouts for a reason. He can't punch. For him to win, everything had to go perfectly and in the seventh round it did not. With the fight still close, Bradley seemed on his way to winning the round when his gloves touched the canvas after he was half shoved down while off balance. The heavily Pacquiao-oriented crowd of 14,665 went wild and it seemed as if that affected referee Tony Weeks' judgment and he mistakenly ruled a knockdown. It happens.

What should not have happened was Bradley's reaction. He seemed to lose his spark at that point, his body language betraying him. His spirits flagged and although he later fought back, he seemed now almost resigned to losing. And so he did.

"I don't think the first knockdown was a real knockdown and it changed the fight," said Bradley's trainer, Teddy Atlas. "Tim went from winning the round 10-9 to losing it 10-8. I thought Tim was doing and trying to do many things we had worked on and he was doing them well but I believe the bad call by Weeks on the knockdown that was not a knockdown affected Tim mentally and changed the fight. Not that we would have won but that changed things.

"But, hey, Manny was good. We understood with a guy as dynamically talented as him there was no margin for error. I just wish I had found a way to change things when the need was there to do that but Pacquiao did a great job in there. Give Pacquiao credit."

Certainly one man did.

"Manny was very strong in there," Bradley said. "He was always very patient. I wasn't professional enough to stay within myself and I walked into his shots."

Asked if he felt Pacquiao should go through with his announced plans to retire to a life in politics, Bradley immediately said, "No, Manny Pacquiao shouldn't retire. He was very quick, very explosive.

"I was basically supposed to drag him in, drag him in, and push him back. Drag him in and push him back, log in the ocean. Anything that goes in the ocean is controlled by the ocean. He was the ocean tonight, I wasn't. I was the log. He's explosive. He has a lot of experience. He has a lot of power. He has a lot of speed. He was the best fighter I ever fought."

The history of the sport argues that Pacquiao won't be gone for long. Very few champions retire without a trouncing. It is as much a part of a fighter's story as is his rise.

Few fighters ever rose higher than Manny Pacquiao and if this is it, he will have made a wise choice. He will have gone out with one last victory that his supporters will always say showed he still had it. He will also have performed admirably in 22 pay-per-view fights that did more than 18 million buys and generated an estimated $1.2 billion in gross revenues, netting him more than $300 million in earnings. He will have beaten the system.

But the Pacquiao we saw against Bradley was a shadow of himself, a fighter now in the ring with two opponents, his opponent and the calendar. He was able to beat one of them at the MGM on April 9 but not the other.

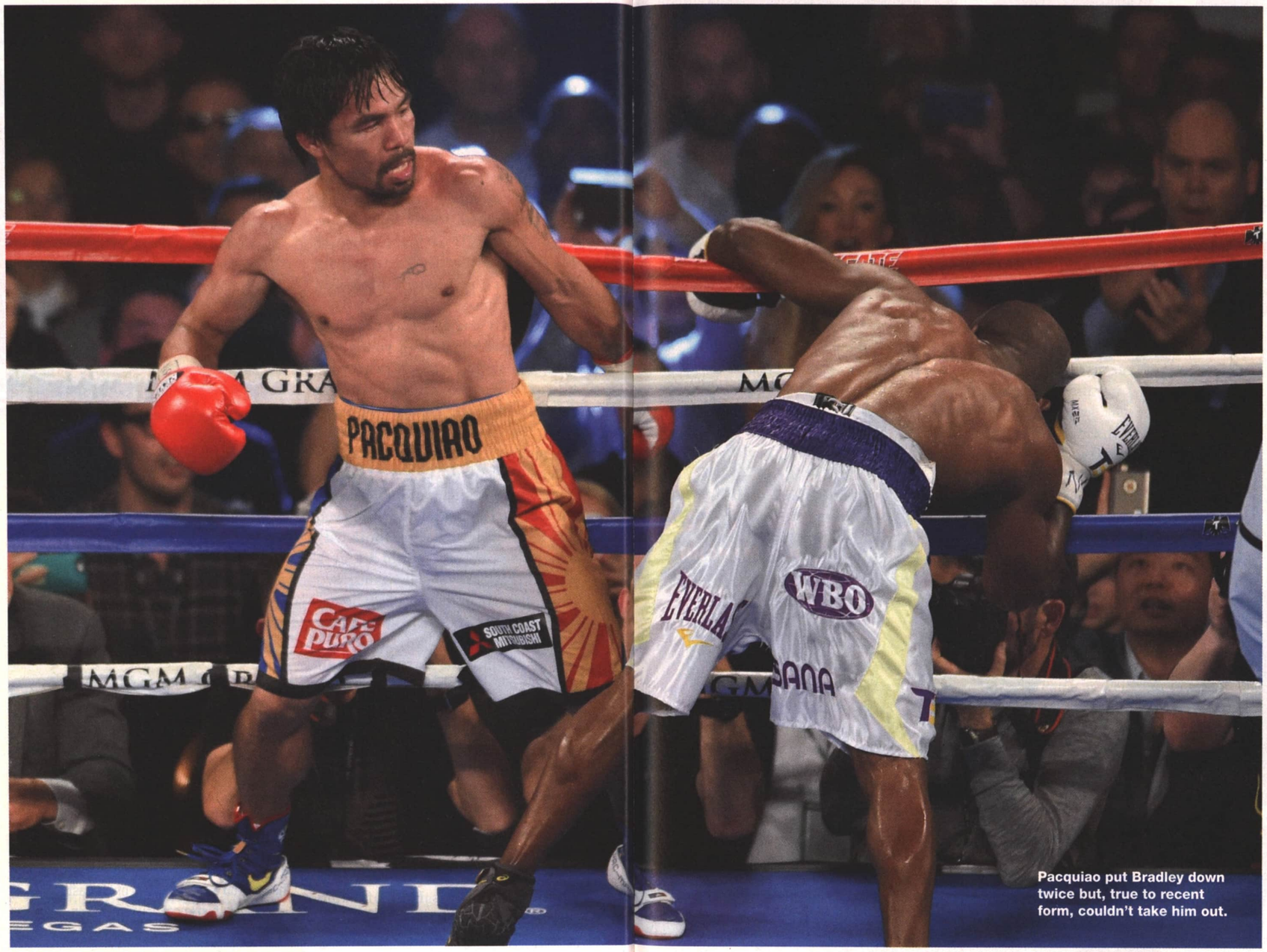
And so, wisely, his talk of retirement continued when the fight was over even while those around him seemed to be urging him to fight on. Whose voice he listens to, in the end, he probably doesn't know.

"Let me enjoy first a retired life," Pacquiao said after improving his record to 58-6-2 (38 knockouts) 11 months after losing to Mayweather and undergoing surgery to repair his left rotator cuff. "If you ask me (if I'll) come back, I don't know. I might be enjoying retired life. I'm not there yet so I don't know the feeling.

"If you ask me about my condition, my body ... I'm still OK. I can still give a good fight. I worked hard in training. I feel OK. I like to fight. I like the way we prepare. I'm happy doing that. So my heart is 50-50 (about retirement). Boxing is a really hard sport, very difficult. I might enjoy retired life or I may come back. Right now, my decision is to retire.

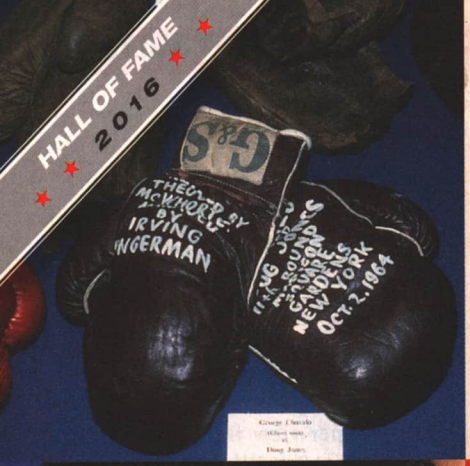
"I've committed to my family that after this fight I will spend more time with them and focus to serve the people of the Philippines. That is my priority."

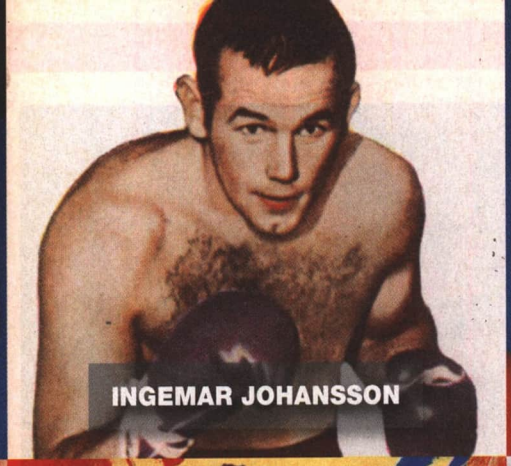
If he's smart, Manny Pacquiao will keep it that way. RING



Pacquiao put Bradley down twice but, true to recent form, couldn't take him out.

NAOKI FUKUDA

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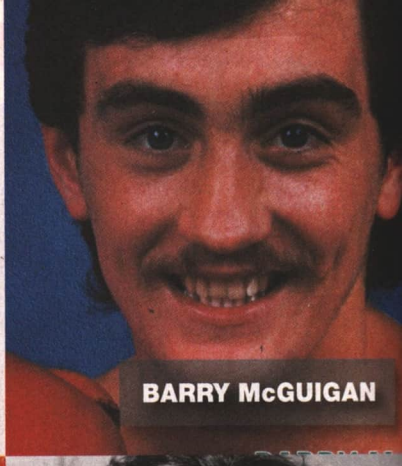
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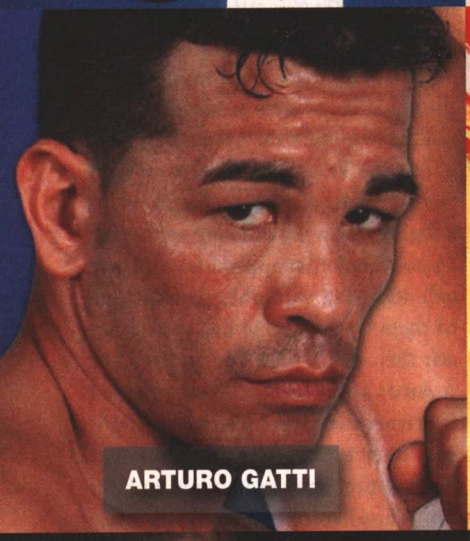
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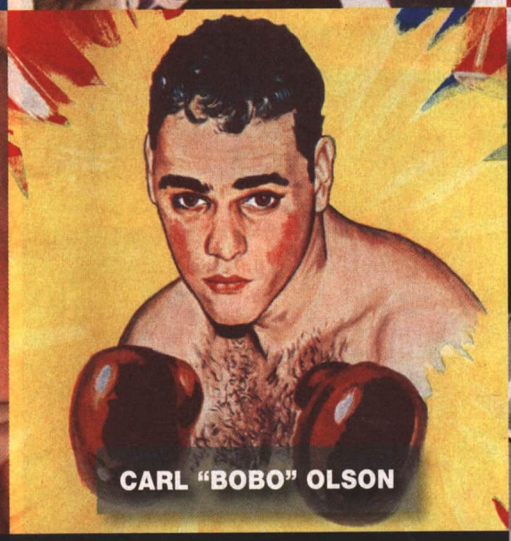
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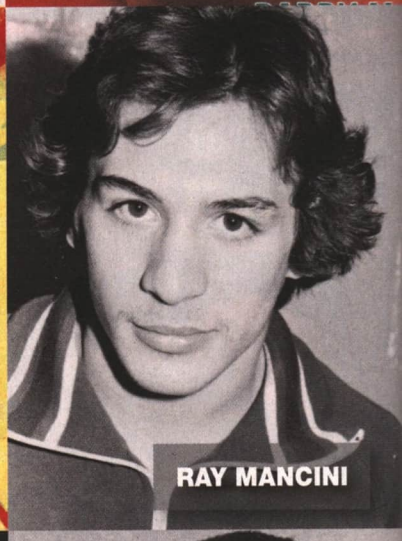
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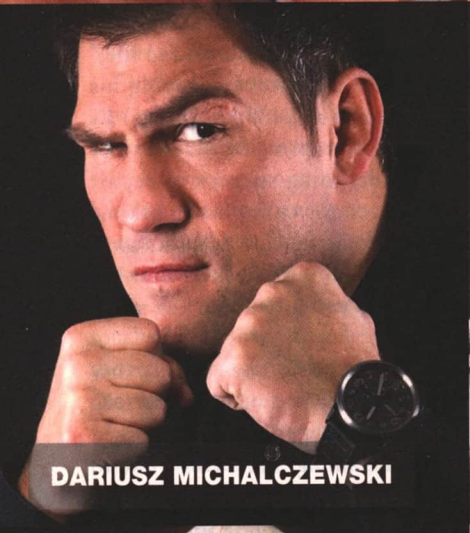
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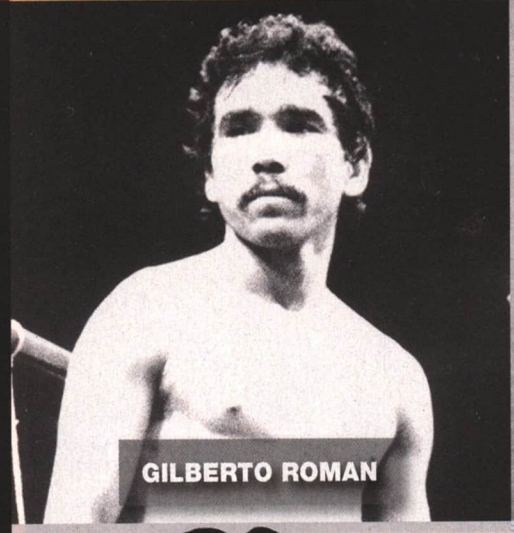
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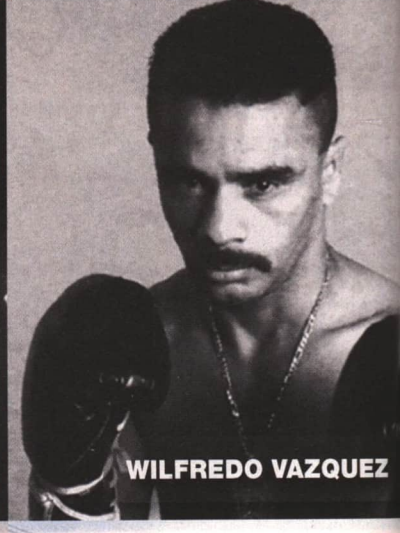
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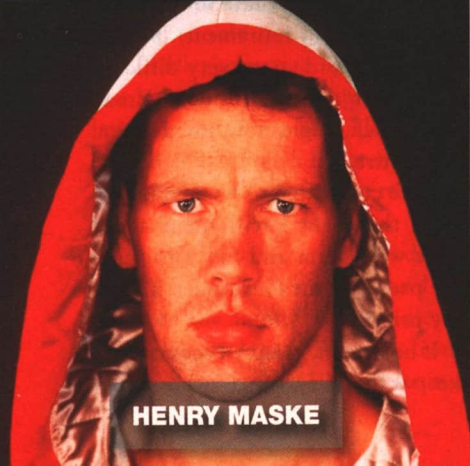
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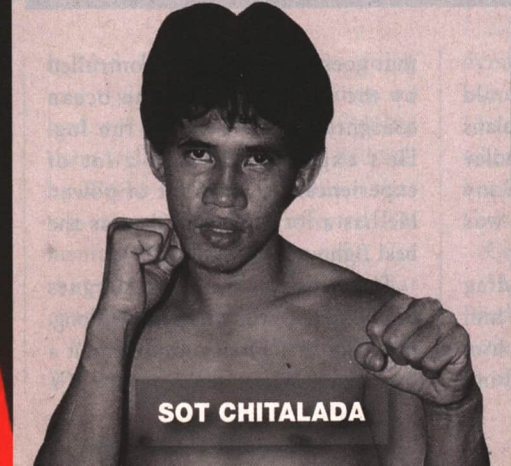

SOT CHITALADA

WHAT THE HALL?

5 FIGHTERS WHO ARE IN THE HALL OF FAME BUT SHOULDN'T BE – AND 5 WHO AREN'T BUT SHOULD BE

By **Lee Groves**

The International Boxing Hall of Fame will officially induct its 27th class on June 12 and this year's Modern category entrants – Hector Camacho Sr., Hilario Zapata and Lupe Pintor – represent a mix of ballot fortunes. The flashy and charismatic "Macho Man" was inducted in his first year of eligibility while the mantis-like Zapata and the gritty, yet dignified Pintor had to wait years (in Zapata's case more than a decade) for their day in the Canastota sun.

There will be little debate about the composition of the 2017 class as Evander Holyfield, Johnny Tapia and Marco Antonio Barrera will be eligible for the first time. But while that lineup is virtually set in stone, past classes have been open to interpretation. One of the fiercest debates regarding Hall of Fame voting is two-pronged: Which Hall of Famers' resumes are the shakiest and which fighters should have been inducted long ago?

The following is one Hall of Fame voter's opinion of the five inductees who wouldn't have received his check mark as well as five fighters who deserve a plaque, a ring and the opportunity to deliver an induction speech (or, in one fighter's case, a loved one to deliver that speech on his behalf).

The common threads between the two lists are dominating skill and longevity. A fighter can get to a certain point with the former alone but to achieve the highest possible career legacy – Hall of Fame enshrinement – the candidate needs to demonstrate both. Those on the first list failed to meet that standard while those on the second list have done so.

This article is not meant to demean those listed in the first section – they all are Hall of Famers and nothing, especially a writer's opinion, should ever change that – but rather emphasize the need for voters to apply higher standards during future deliberations. If that goal is achieved, and if wiser choices are made going forward, the legacy and stature of the Hall of Fame as well as those charged with the responsibility of assessing its candidates will be further enhanced.

SHOULD BE OUT

INGEMAR JOHANSSON

Active: 1952-63
Record: 26-2 (17 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 1-2 (1 KO)
Reasons he's on this list: The threshold for induction should be high, especially so at heavyweight with tenants like Sullivan, Dempsey, Louis, Charles, Marciano, Ali, Frazier, Holmes, Tyson and Lewis. Ingo's record isn't in the same galaxy as the aforementioned big men. Yes, Johansson scored a glorious upset the first time he faced Floyd Patterson but Patterson avenged that defeat not once, but twice … and by knockout both times. Leon Spinks also had a 1-2 record in heavyweight title fights and he's never been on the ballot. In my opinion, Johansson shouldn't have been either. One life-changing night inside the ring can transform a fighter into a champion but only sustained greatness should make him a Hall of Famer.

BARRY McGUIGAN

Active: 1981-89
Record: 32-3 (28 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 2-1 (0 KOs)
Reasons he's on this list: "The Clones Cyclone" appeared on his way to unquestioned Hall of Fame status by out-pointing ex-champ Juan LaPorte, dethroning the legendary Eusebio Pedroza and stopping mandatory challenger Bernard Taylor. But then his form suddenly turned south. His 14th-round TKO over Danilo Cabrera was unexpectedly grueling. Then, in his eagerly awaited return to the U.S., a heat-weakened McGuigan suffered three knockdowns and a stunning decision loss to late sub Steve Cruz. McGuigan didn't fight again for nearly two years and, after three nondescript victories, retired at age 28 following a TKO loss to Jim McDonnell. McGuigan was exceptionally talented but his time at the top was too brief. Had he met and beaten WBC counterpart Azumah Nelson his cause would have been strengthened but it wasn't to be.

ARTURO GATTI

Active: 1991-2007

Record: 40-9 (31 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 9-3 (6 KOs)
Reasons he's on this list: Yes, Gatti was an all-time action fighter but his success ratio in top fights was hit-and-miss. He was involved in four RING Fights of the Year but lost two of them, to Ivan Robinson in 1998 and Micky Ward in 2002. Gatti was favored to win both fights. And he went only 11-8 in his final 19, including consecutive victories over Eric Jakubowski, a grossly out-sized Joey Gamache and Reyes Munoz. Finally, when Gatti met elites Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather Jr., he was clobbered. It was no shame for Gatti to lose those fights but the extreme gap in class should've been too wide for voters to ignore. Most did.

CARL "BOBO" OLSON

Active: 1944-66
Record: 97-16-2 (46 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 5-6 (0 KOs)
Reasons he's on this list: Olson had some success during a deep middleweight era but his title tenure – which materialized only because of the retirement of Sugar Ray Robinson, to whom Olson had already lost twice – lasted just two years and three defenses. Olson was a 3-to-1 favorite to beat the comebacking, 34-year-old Robinson, who had been struggling to regain his form, but Robinson found his groove and regained the title by second-round KO. To add insult to injury, Robinson stopped Olson in four rounds six months later. Shortly before losing the title he challenged light heavyweight king Archie Moore and was flattened in three rounds. In fact, five of his six losses against titleholders were by KO and four were inside four rounds. Not the most sparkling resume.

RAY MANCINI

Active: 1979-92
Record: 29-5 (23 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 4-5 (3 KOs)
Reasons he's on this list: Mancini's all-action attack enabled him to complete his heartwarming pursuit of the

HALL OF FAME: CLASS OF 2016

MODERN

HECTOR CAMACHO
ACTIVE: 1980-2010
RECORD: 79-6-3 (38 KOs)
BACKGROUND: "Macho" perhaps is best known for flamboyance but make no mistake: The gifted southpaw could fight, particularly in the first half of his career. The three-division titleholder used an unusual combination of speed and skills to beat an impressive list of quality opponents, including Bazooka Limon, Jose Ramirez, Edwin Rosario, Cornelius Boza-Edwards, Ray Mancini and Vinny Pazienza – all between 1983 and 1990.

LUPE PINTOR
ACTIVE: 1974-95
RECORD: 56-14-2 (42 KOs)
BACKGROUND: Pintor was a swarming action fighter who delighted fans and got results. The product of Mexico City won world titles in two divisions, defeating along the way such respected fighters as Carlos Zarate and Albert Davila. He also gave a prime Wilfredo Gomez all he could handle in a 1982 classic in which he was stopped in 14 rounds, after which his career declined. He made an unsuccessful comeback in the 1990s.

HILARIO ZAPATA
ACTIVE: 1977-93
RECORD: 43-10-1 (14 KOs)
BACKGROUND: The Panamanian couldn't punch but he drove his opponents crazy with his long jab and elusiveness, which served him well: He won titles as both a junior flyweight and flyweight. He outpointed Shigeo Nakajima to win a 108-pound title and successfully defended eight times. Then, after a three-fight second reign at 108, he outpointed Alonzo Gonzalez to win a 112-pound belt and successfully defended five times.

OLD-TIMER

PETEY SARRON
ACTIVE: 1924-39
RECORD: 103-23-12 (25 KOs)
BACKGROUND: The most accomplished fighter ever from Alabama fought the best in an era deep with talent and usually came out on top. His greatest victory came in 1936, when he outpointed fellow Hall of Famer Freddie Miller to win the featherweight title. He went 2-4 against Miller overall, with both wins in championship fights. He lost his belt to the great Henry Armstrong (by sixth-round knockout) in 1937.

NON-PARTICIPANT

WHITEY ESNEAULT
POSITION: Trainer
BACKGROUND: "Mr. Whitey" imparted his mastery of the fundamentals out of his New Orleans gym for a half century. He worked with Ralph Dupas and Willie Pastrano, among many others.

HAROLD LEDERMAN
POSITION: Judge/broadcaster
BACKGROUND: Lederman was a respected judge out of New York, working more than 100 title fights before becoming HBO's popular "unofficial" judge on countless broadcasts.

MARK RATNER
POSITION: Official
BACKGROUND: Ratner was the longtime executive director of the Nevada Athletic Commission, where he gained a reputation for competence and integrity.

OBSERVER

JERRY IZENBERG
POSITION: Writer
BACKGROUND: The longtime columnist with the Newark Star-Ledger and author of 10 books retired in 2007 as one of the top sportswriters in the United States.

COL. BOB SHERIDAN
POSITION: Broadcaster
BACKGROUND: Sheridan found his niche as the lead voice on international broadcasts, adding excitement to every card he worked with his passion and energy.

lightweight title his father was denied by World War II but the rigors of his style didn't allow him to assemble a long-term record of excellence. His losing effort against Alexis Arguello as a 20-year-old was exceptional and his 12-round victory over Jose Luis Ramirez showcased underrated boxing skills but, after Duk Koo Kim died, the trait that most defined Mancini – his drive – eroded.
He struggled against unheralded Peruvian Orlando Romero and, after pulverizing a past-prime Bobby Chacon, he surprisingly lost the title to Livingstone Bramble and then lost a blood-soaked rematch. In effect, Mancini was finished before his mid-20s and it's rare that a Hall of Famer can complete a compelling story that quickly.

SHOULD BE IN

DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI

Active: 1991-2005
Record: 48-2 (38 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 5-2 (2 KOs)
Reasons he's on this list: Michalczewski's WBO light heavyweight title reign lasted more than nine years and encompassed 23 defenses, second to Joe Louis on the all-time, all-divisions list. Also, his decisive victory over WBA/IBF titlist Virgil Hill unified three belts and crowned him lineal champion. Boxing politics forced "The Tiger" to vacate the belts he took from Hill and diametrically opposed agendas blocked a much-desired unification against Roy Jones Jr. Still, Michalczewski fared well against mutual foes Derrick Harmon (KO 9), Richard Hall (KO 11, KO 10), Montell Griffin (KO 4) and Hill (UD 12). He also enjoyed a brief stint as WBO cruiserweight king after dethroning Nestor Giovannini and he ran his record to 48-0 before closing his career with losses to Julio Cesar Gonzalez and Fabrice Tiozzo.

GILBERTO ROMAN

Active: 1981-90
Record: 54-6-1 (35 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 7-4-1 (1 KO)
Reasons he's on this list: Except for Hall of Famer Khaosai Galaxy, Roman was the best 115-pounder of his era. He stuffed 11 defenses into two reigns spanning 43 months, trailing only Galaxy's 19 and Johnny Tapia's 13. The first reign began with a points win over Jiro Watanabe in Japan and his best wins came against Edgar Monserrat, ex-flyweight champions Antonio Avelar and Frank Cedeno, future 122-pound titlist Kiyoshi Hatanaka, mandatory challenger Juan Carazo, onetime bantamweight title challenger Paul Ferreri, flyweight contender Antoine Montero and two-division king Santos Laciar. Officially, Roman went 1-1-1 against Laciar but one can strongly argue he should have swept the series. Additionally, Roman's scientific style, molded by Hall of Fame trainer Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain, paved the way toward a newer, smarter image of Mexican fighters.

WILFREDO VAZQUEZ

Active: 1981-2002
Record: 56-9-2 (41 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 8-7-1 (4 KOs)
Reasons he's on this list: The above stat line is somewhat misleading because Vazquez started 1-5-1 (1 KO) against fellow titleholders but went 8-2 (3 KOs) in his last 10 and captured WBA titles at 118, 122 and 126. Not only did he win each as a road underdog, he did so by knockout. The second of the sequence, a third-round KO over Raul Perez, avenged a clear decision defeat and the third was a come-from-way-behind knockout of Eloy Rojas when Vazquez was nearly 35. He notched nine defenses at 122, with his best wins coming against Luis Mendoza, Thierry Jacob and Orlando Canizales, while at 126 he added four defenses before being forced to vacate because he chose to fight WBO king Naseem Hamed. His late-career surge merits elevation.

HENRY MASKE

Active: 1990-2007
Record: 31-1 (11 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 6-1 (2 KOs)
Reasons he's on this list: Maske recorded 10 defenses of the IBF light heavyweight title during his 44-month reign, most of which were lopsided decision victories. That includes his title-winning effort against the long-reigning Prince Charles Williams. If you take a close look at the scoring during his championship run, you'll see that Maske was about as dominating as Roy Jones Jr., Pernell Whitaker, Wladimir Klitschko and Floyd Maywewather Jr. when they were at their best. Add in Maske's victories over Iran Barkley and Graciano Rocchigiani, his sterling amateur career (topped by Olympic gold in 1988) as well as sparking a boxing renaissance in Germany that continues to this day, one can argue that Maske boasts Hall-worthy historic standing.

SOT CHITALADA

Active: 1983-92
Record: 26-4-1 (16 KOs)
Record against world titleholders: 7-4-1 (1 KO)
Reasons he's on this list: At his peak, Chitalada blended lightning speed with unusual right-handed power and was good enough in his fifth pro fight to push WBC junior flyweight king Jung-Koo Chang to the brink before losing on points. Three fights later Chitalada captured the first of two 112-pound titles by out-pointing Gabriel Bernal, albeit by split decision before Chitalada's home fans. Bernal probably should have won the rematch after flooring Chitalada twice but the Thai answered all doubters by dominating the third meeting with his spectacular combinations and ring generalship. Additionally, he notched wins over former titlist Freddy Castillo and future 115-pound king Carlos Salazar as well as road victories over Chang in South Korea and onetime flyweight beltholder Charlie Magri in London.

Could the dreams of top amateurs like American Shakur Stevenson be dashed by pros in the Olympics?

COMPLETE OVERHAUL

BOXING IN THE OLYMPICS – INCLUDING THE PROBABLE INTRODUCTION OF PROS – WILL LOOK VASTLY DIFFERENT THIS SUMMER

By **Bernard Fernandez**

The Olympic ideal of "simon-pure amateurism" long espoused by the late Avery Brundage has been in its death throes for decades. And if a rules change being pushed by the current leader of international Olympic-style boxing, Dr. Ching-Kuo Wu of Taiwan, is approved as anticipated by the International Boxing Association (AIBA) congress in South Korea in June, the last spadeful of dirt will be shoveled into the grave.

Whether that is a good thing or a disaster in the making has yet to be determined.

The likely introduction of professional boxers into the Olympics, and in time for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games beginning in August, renders other announced rules changes almost inconsequential by comparison. The oft-criticized computer scoring will be replaced by a pro-style 10-point system and the use of protective headgear, which had been mandated since the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, will no longer be allowed.

"Those are the two major changes – for now," said Mike Martino, executive director of USA Boxing, the national governing body of the sport, who acknowledges that the June 1 seal of approval from AIBA regarding the eligibility of pro boxers for the Rio Olympics is something his organization has been bracing for with some trepidation.

When the hammer comes down, as it surely must, the United States – whose status as Olympic boxing's dominant power has been eroding steadily since America's 1984 team amassed a record 11 medals (including nine golds) – will be all but isolated by a mechanism that does not allow for quick and painless adjustments to the selection process. The 10 members of the U.S. Olympic men's boxing team and three members of the women's team earned their spots during Team Trials in December. Martino said that, regardless of what AIBA decides, the mostly young, relatively inexperienced boxers who have already qualified for berths in the field at Rio will not be replaced on short notice by pros.

"That won't happen in the United States," Martino said when asked if, say, 32-year-old undefeated pro Andre Ward (29-0, 15 KOs) – the

last American man to take a gold medal in boxing – might displace 21-year-old Jonathan Esquivel as the U.S. light heavyweight representative in Brazil, should Esquivel, who has yet to qualify, make it that far. "We have a selection procedure that was approved by the U.S. Olympic Committee. The team that we have is the team that we have. Our selection procedure is in place, it's posted and we followed it. If we didn't follow it, we'd find ourselves being sued.

"Could we go back to the USOC with an amended selection procedure? Yes. Have we in the past? Yes. Why? Because it was driven by changes instituted by the national federation. Would we consider such an amendment at this late date? Probably not. I don't see that happening, although I suppose nothing is impossible.

"We would have to rewrite our selection procedures and get the USOC to approve them and make a determination regarding those weight divisions in which we have not qualified boxers yet. In theory, that would allow for existing pros to come in as members of the U.S. Olympic team. But what would be the selection procedure? Would you have a tournament? Or just subjectively pick someone on the basis of his or her credentials?"

At our press time, just four of the 10 male members of the U.S. Olympic boxing team – light flyweight Nico Hernandez, bantamweight Shakur Stevenson, lightweight Carlos Balderas and middleweight Charles Conwell – had their tickets to Brazil punched, as did two of the three women's team members, middleweight Claressa Shields (the defending gold medalist) and lightweight Mikaela Mayer.

Those still on the outside looking in, along with Esquivel, are flyweight Antonio Vargas, light welterweight Gary Russell, welterweight Paul Kroll, heavyweight Cam F. Awesome and super heavyweight Marlo Moore among the men, and female flyweight Virginia Fuchs. Some will have no doubt survived additional winnowing-out in the remaining qualifying tournaments but there is at least a possibility of a repeat of the disastrous 2012 London Olympics, in which the U.S. men failed to capture a single medal for the first time. Remember, the U.S. almost certainly will be sending all-amateur squads, mostly populated by boxers in their late teens and early 20s, against older fighters from other countries, more than a few of whom will have varying degrees of pro experience.

No wonder the idea of Ward going for another gold medal is appealing to some Americans, as might the prospect of WBC heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder, a bronze medalist at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, seeking to upgrade to gold, or Floyd Mayweather Jr., who had to settle for a bronze after losing a hotly disputed computer decision to Bulgaria's Serafim Todorov in the featherweight semifinals, avenging the only disappointment in his incredible career. For his part, Ward has said he finds the notion of again representing his country in the Olympics "intriguing," as have such internationally renowned pro stars as Ukraine's Wladimir Klitschko, Great Britain's Amir Khan, the Philippines' Manny Pacquiao and Kazakhstan's Gennady Golovkin.

But count Roy Jones Jr., whose "loss" to South Korea's Park Si-Hun in the 1988 Seoul Olympics might be the foremost miscarriage of justice in boxing history, pro or amateur (and led to the institution of just-as-despised computer scoring), among those who are leery of throwing open the gates to unfettered participation by pros in Olympic boxing.

"I don't think it's a good idea," Jones said. "After all, the road to the Olympics is for the young. As a teenager, I wanted to represent my country at the Olympics. When I moved to professional boxing, it became my job. Everything comes in good time. Imagine your 19-year-old son gets sent to the Olympic Games and now he has to fight Wladimir Klitschko. My honest opinion, no (it shouldn't happen)."

As envisioned by Brundage, who served as president of the USOC from 1928 to 1953, and as president of the International Olympic Committee from 1952 to '72, the wall between amateur and professional sports had to be preserved no matter what.

"Sports must be amateur or it is not sport," insisted Brundage, who was 87 when he died on May 8, 1975. "Sports played professionally are entertainment. As soon as you take money for playing a sport, it isn't sport. It's work."

During a June 1947 gathering of International Amateur Athletic Union delegates, Brundage angrily spoke out against a proposal that would have allowed for Olympians to be paid $4-a-day expense money during the London Games the following year. The delegates squirmed in their seats and tabled the proposal.

It thus should not come as a surprise that Brundage, who himself competed in the pentathlon and decathlon in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, steadfastly rejected any suggestion that the gold medals won in those events by his U.S. teammate, Jim Thorpe – medals which were stripped when it was discovered that Thorpe had played semipro baseball for two seasons – be restored. Times change, however, and Thorpe – who, in a poll conducted by ABC Sports was voted the Greatest Athlete of the 20th Century – had his medals returned by a vote of the IOC in 1983, 30 years after his death.

But it wasn't until 1992, when the "Dream Team" of NBA superstars steamrolled to the gold medal in men's basketball at the Barcelona Olympics, that the wall between the pros and amateurs that Brundage had strived so long to preserve began to collapse in ever-larger chunks. Pros now compete at the Olympics not only in basketball, but in soccer, tennis, track and field and just about everything else except boxing and wrestling.

Little wonder then that Dr. Wu has

worked as diligently at tearing down the last standing portions of that crumbling wall as Brundage once did at guarding it.

"We want the best boxers to come to the Olympic Games," Wu said. "It is AIBA's 70th birthday and we want something to change – not after four years (the 2020 Olympics will be held in Tokyo), but now.

"It is an IOC policy to have the best athletes in the Games and, of the international federations, AIBA is probably the only one without professional athletes in the Olympics. Boxing is one of the few remaining Olympic sports that requires full amateur status for all its participants. (But) AIBA is boxing's world governing body and has been working hard at getting professional fighters into the Olympics."

The "professionalization" of Olympic boxing actually began some years ago, when Wu – who also was the catalyst for AIBA introducing women's boxing to the Olympics in London four years ago – set up the semi-professional World Series of Boxing in 2011, in which fighters earned money competing for city-based teams.

"Other countries are not restrained by the restrictions that we have," Martino noted. "We have told AIBA that we will not compete against current professional boxers. The foreign boxers we are competing against are strictly AOB (AIBA Open Boxing). There are now guidelines on boxers being able to participate in APB (AIBA Professional Boxing) which limit boxers to fewer than 20 pro bouts. We do not have any of our boxers participating under the APB format. We do participate in the World Series of Boxing but only because it's an automatic qualifier for the Olympic Games and we want to give our boxers every opportunity to compete in as many formats as possible. But none of our athletes are pros and we don't enter pros in the WSB."

Apart from the question of pro participation, upon which the future success or failure of Olympic boxing may well hinge, the other two rules changes are something more than mere window dressing.

It is hoped that corruption and/or incompetence can be minimized by the new scoring system. Five judges, as in the past, will be utilized for each Olympic bout but a computer (they can't get rid of those things entirely, it would seem) will randomly pick three judges whose tallies will be the only ones counted. Men's bouts will consist of three three-minute rounds, women's bouts of four two-minute rounds.

"You hope the judges will still count clean blows leading to the winner of the round getting 10 points to nine, eight or whatever for his opponent," Martino said. "The fact that no one knows which three of the judges' scores will be used hopefully will eliminate the possibility of compromised scoring."

And the removal of headgear?

"Obviously, when you use headgear it makes your head a bigger target," Martino said. "There is some thought that that makes boxers more susceptible to sustaining concussions. It also has been suggested that boxers wearing headgear have a narrower field of peripheral vision and that they take more risks because they believe having that piece of equipment protects them more.

"There's arguments on both sides. There's no question the use of headgear protects against cuts and orbital fractures from head-butts and what have you. In a multiday tournament, where boxers might have to fight three or four times, sustaining a cut could eliminate some of the better ones on the first day of competition if the cut is bad enough."

The removal of headgear and the revised scoring system, of course, make Olympic boxing seem that much more like the brand you see in the pros. And when all is said and done, isn't that the objective of the reformers? RING

BIG CHANGES ↓

SCORING

Instead of the computer scoring that was supposed to be the answer to injustices like Roy Jones Jr.'s screwing in Seoul in 1988, it's a return to a 10-point scoring system like the one used by the pros. Except that it's not exactly the same; only three of the five judges' scores will count and those judges will be selected randomly by computer during each bout. Hopefully, it will eliminate or at least minimize the possibility of a judge being bought.

★

NO HEADGEAR

Being able to see the faces of the boxers is more TV-friendly and increases the chance of the next Cassius Clay or Sugar Ray Leonard becoming a breakout star. No one is saying that's the reason the headgear is being removed, though. The cover story is that headgear restricts peripheral vision and makes the head a bigger target, which could lead to more concussions. No headgear also raises the likelihood of more serious cuts, so that's the tradeoff.

★

DOOR OPEN TO PROS

Hey, if the gold medal-winning NBA "Dream Team" was such a smash at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, why not bring in millionaire pros whose reputations are already established? The quality of the competition would be raised, sure. But what incentive would there be for little kids with Olympic dreams to take up the sport at the amateur level? Be careful what you wish for, AIBA.

It took Anthony Joshua only 4 minutes, 32 seconds to win his first title.

Fast Track

ANTHONY JOSHUA TOOK A SIGNIFICANT STEP BY WINNING THE IBF HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE BUT HAS MUCH BIGGER PLANS

London Olympic Games super heavyweight gold medalist Anthony Joshua was crowned Britain's 12th reigning world champion on April 9 at the O2 Arena, albeit against one of the weakest defending champions in the history of heavyweight boxing.

Joshua claimed the IBF belt 1 minute, 32 seconds into the second round from Charles Martin, who picked up a check estimated at $5 million, probably counting his money as the referee counted him out. No one can ever prove that Martin simply came for a payday but he really did bottle it against the muscular giant from north London.

Anthony Oluwafemi Olaseni Joshua has a fascinating story. He was born in Watford, England, the son of a Nigerian mother, Yeta, and a Nigerian/Irish father, Robert, and was on a fast track to trouble 10 years ago.

Even when the man-mountain of a boxer was on the cusp of achieving world honors as an amateur, in 2010 he was arrested with cannabis in his car. Police did not have much of an issue identifying him either: Joshua was wearing his GB boxing tracksuit at the time.

But boxing – or more specifically Finchley Amateur Boxing Club – saved the 26-year-old who completed a meteoric rise from troubled club boxer to world heavyweight champion.

One day in 2007 changed Joshua's life forever. He was taken to the amateur boxing club by his cousin, Ben Ileyemi, who is also an unbeaten professional heavyweight. The 17-year-old Joshua had gone just to take part in a fitness class and lift weights but once fitted with a pair of gloves, he was away.

Joshua progressed quickly and within 2½ years had been fast-tracked into the Great Britain system as an Olympic prospect.

He was utterly dedicated – first in, last out -- and enjoyed all the extra support staff paid for within the system: two physios, a dietitian, strength and conditioning expert, sports psychologist. He was stimulated by it all.

But then came the arrest in 2010 for possession and intent to supply marijuana. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a 12-month community order and 100 hours' unpaid work.

Severe warnings followed from Team GB coaches and he was suspended. The Olympics was only a year and a half away, and when he won the silver medal at the world championships Joshua realized just what he had almost thrown away.

In the summer of 2012, Joshua won Olympic gold and his path was set.

"He's got a big team 'round him. It isn't just me," his trainer, Tony Sims, said. "Everyone does their individual jobs with him."

The large team behind him has been influenced by his time at the English Institute for Sport, which prepares amateur boxers for the

Olympics. He uses a strength and conditioning coach, Jamie Reynolds; two physiotherapists, including Rob Madden at the CHHP Clinic in Harley Street; and a nutritionist, Mark Ellison, who also works with Britain's Olympic combat sports competitors, as well as Sims.

"He believes it's his plan in life to unify the belts," Sims said. "He hasn't changed as a person. He's still the same. Down to earth, a lovely grounded man, from a very nice family."

Joshua's crossover appeal is huge. Whatever his critics say, he is doing little wrong: He still lives with his mother in a two-bedroom flat and has surrounded himself with a legion of advisers. There are few hangers-on. He has set up his own management company.

And he's a fan of Floyd Mayweather Jr. – his work ethic, not his lifestyle. "They still give Mayweather stick," he said. "You've got to do what you've got to do. I'm not saying I'll be undefeated. You know how tough this game is. People say Mayweather won fights he shouldn't have won. (Muhammad) Ali took losses. I don't know. It's going to be tough."

But Joshua has a realism about him which leaves you knowing that there is little that he will not take on board. "The world is full of information," he said. "It's what information you choose to absorb that makes it a reality. I'm listening to people. If people tell me I'm not the real deal time and time again and I choose to believe that, then I'm going to fight like a no-hoper. But if I believe the right stuff, from people who support me, that's a different story."

Up next in June and July, Joshua and Tyson Fury will defend their titles and will be headed on a collision course if both are successful. Fury, who fights Wladimir Klitschko for the second time on July 9, says the IBF title Joshua holds is a "paper title" and in a way, he is correct. Fury had that belt ripped from him by the sanctioning body.

But the division is more exciting now than it has been for a very, very long time.

Concern over Nick Blackwell's health sparked heated discussion.

NICK BLACKWELL

Just under four weeks after being admitted to a hospital and placed in a medically induced coma, British middleweight Nick Blackwell announced his retirement from boxing. After fight No. 24, against Chris Eubank Jr., the toughest fight of his career, he had escaped with his future intact when he was awakened from anesthesia after eight days of 24-hour care.

We say in boxing that ring warriors are "too brave for their own good." It is a mark of respect, of course, but an expression of concern for the men we follow who appear to display scant regard for their own safety.

Blackwell has such a reputation not only in the fights we have witnessed but those we do not see behind closed doors: as a sparring partner. That gladiatorial attitude spawned a growing army of supporters for his willingness to go toe-to-toe with opponents and face anyone. No fear. Never back down.

Boxing for Blackwell was like a calling. Even before he pulled a pair of gloves tight around his hands, before his hands were ever carefully wrapped, Blackwell had told friends, teachers and schoolmates that he was a boxer. But his iron-clad chin, huge heart and genuine power in his fists saw him get deep into a war with Eubank.

The 25-year-old was defending his British middleweight title in London on March 26 after a fairly unsavory build-up with Eubank, son of Chris Eubank Sr. Two very

PA IMAGES

tough men went to war but it was Blackwell who carried the brunt of the punishment, walking through most of it imperviously.

However, Eubank's dominance as the fight wore on exhausted Blackwell and he required oxygen after referee Victor Loughlin stopped the contest in the 10th round on the advice of the ringside physician but only because of a large, ugly hematoma above Blackwell's left eyebrow. It had all but closed the eye.

Concern over Blackwell's health drew widespread comment. Several factors added to the growing alarm. The contest had involved someone called Eubank and it was shown on network television Channel 5, drawing an audience of around 3.5 million while boxing is enjoying a renaissance with 12 world champions from these isles.

Everyone had an opinion, from medical experts to one idiotic chief sportswriter who suggested the idea of boxing was to bludgeon a man into this state.

Peter Hamlyn, a leading neurosurgeon I've known for almost 20 years and for whom I have huge respect on the subject of brain injuries, had a unique take. He had watched the contest and urged the British Boxing Board of Control to instruct its licensed referees to follow stricter procedures – and stop fights sooner.

Hamlyn, who operated on Michael Watson after he suffered near-catastrophic brain injuries in a bout for the WBO middleweight crown against, of course, Chris Eubank Sr. in 1991 at White Hart Lane, maintained that the fight "should have been stopped earlier."

What mainly concerned Hamlyn was that as Blackwell's resistance to power shots grew weaker and that his tensile strength left him.

"These guys are really hard," Hamlyn said. "Fighters like Blackwell don't get knocked out. Title fights are over-represented by fighters ending up in hospital. They are guys by definition who hit harder and they can defend themselves when they are fresh. But what you can't do is keep your head rock solid or your neck rock solid as you tire so you get hit by much more harmful punches.

"When you saw the nature of the punches that Eubank was landing, they were causing violent movement of Blackwell's head and that's when you get the shearing and tearing of blood vessels and damage. By the time they stopped it in the 10th round, Blackwell could not defend himself and was partially-sighted."

Hamlyn continued: "From all the data we have looked at, post-Michael Watson, what we found was that title fights are the high-risk fights. By definition these are the most dangerous fights and the ones that should be being stopped early.

"My view is that going forward the Boxing Board will lower the threshold in its guidelines to referees. I'm absolutely not in the camp that boxing should be banned but I think we need to make things safer by avoiding risk."

FATHERS AND SONS

While Chris Eubank Sr. and his son hit the headlines, so too did his old foe Nigel Benn. There has also been a proliferation of father and son stories of late, the likes of which we have not witnessed in British boxing for some time. Nigel Benn was a thriller in the ring. He was angry, he had served with the British Army in Northern Ireland in The Troubles, he had battered Iran Barkley in one round, dropping and stopping him. And Barkley was no mug. He could fight. He had legendary battles with Eubank Sr.

So it was very poignant when Conor Benn, his 19-year-old son, was unveiled as a professional boxer in April. The elder Benn, the former world middleweight and super middleweight titleholder, now 52, revealed that he had sparred twice with his son, aged 15, and then aged 18, "full on." He had footage of it on his phone, too, but he wasn't showing anyone.

Benn Jr. sustained a broken nose and was bleeding from the mouth when father tested the young man's mettle in their first session. "The first time we went at it I did batter him," Benn Sr. said. "He learns quick. But we sparred again three years later and it was like fighting something from The Matrix. He had me, hit me hard."

Said Benn Jr.: "We're not usual in that way. But I love and respect my dad. He was a legend in boxing and I've watched every one of his fights. I've watched the Gerald McClellan fight at least 20 times."

"I didn't want him to box," Benn Sr. added. "But as he has grown, I see he has me in him. He doesn't have the rage that I had but he can really fight, he has fighting instinct. I'd like to see him get out at 30, with security for the rest of his life. So many boxers finish in this sport without a pot to piss in."

TOP 10

1. AMIR KHAN
2. TYSON FURY
3. KELL BROOK
4. LEE SELBY
5. CARL FRAMPTON
6. JAMES DEGALE
7. JAMIE MCDONNELL
8. SCOTT QUIGG
9. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
10. CALLUM SMITH

11-15: Liam Smith, Tony Bellew, Terry Flanagan, Chris Eubank Jr., Anthony Crolla

Through fights of April 24, 2016

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The Telegraph, London.

EXCERPTS FROM THE **RINGTV.COM** EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN

Gennady Golovkin's isn't looking for soft touches. Dominic Wade (on the canvas here) was a mandatory challenger.

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialog – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag."

The following excerpts are from the April 22 and 25 editions of the Monday and Friday mailbags.

VINCENT SANTINO, from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, says K2 Promotions has done a good job of building Gennady Golovkin's name and fan base in the U.S. but a lousy job of securing him "major fights" against the kind of credible opponents that will give him enough resistance to prepare him for elite fighters. In Santino's words: "(Golovkin) is 34 and has spent eight years of his prime knocking out guys who are not challenges to his skill level. I see that as a problem because when he finally does step up, he'll be used to pushing guys around and not getting hit with authority. I have to believe the responsibility for this lies with his promoter. Would Golden Boy or Top Rank let him continue to knock out contenders for years without pushing him up or down in weight to make big fights?"

DOUGIE'S reply: I think Golden Boy Promotions or Top Rank would do the same thing with Golovkin that K2 Promotions has done. At least they'd try to. Tom Loeffler has done a masterful job of taking an unknown middleweight from Kazakhstan and making him a draw in the Los Angeles and New York City areas, as well as an athlete that corporate American is interested in sponsoring, while trying to make fan-friendly matchups against credible opponents.

I don't think K2 is looking for soft touches for Golovkin. They've put the pressure-fighting boxer-puncher in with several durable middleweights (Daniel Geale, Martin Murray, Willie Monroe Jr., Osumanu Adama, Grzegorz Proksa and Nobuhiro Ishida had never been stopped in the pro ranks prior to facing "GGG"). And joke all you want about Ishida but the gangly Japanese journeyman went the distance with both Paul Williams and Dmitry Pirog and hasn't been halted since Golovkin iced him with a one-hitter quitter. Golovkin is just an expert at breaking down his opponents.

Loeffler has also tried to make high-profile fights against Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and Carl Froch – both big, rugged super middleweight stars at the time of the negotiations – for Golovkin. Chavez Jr. opted out of the fight (in part due to issues with his former promoter, Top Rank) and Froch retired. But there has been a willingness to "push" him up in weight to make "big fights."

Loeffler is also trying to make high-profile bouts at middleweight. That's why he shrewdly maneuvered GGG into the WBC mandatory position, cornering Miguel Cotto and later Canelo Alvarez, two of the biggest stars in boxing. Cotto, who is winding down his career, had no intention of fighting GGG and had no problem with being stripped of the WBC title (after previously paying out some step-aside money to hold Golovkin off). And while Golden Boy Promotions may not be 100 percent committed to making Canelo-GGG this year, the demand for that eventual showdown has been created and it will only get stronger as the young Mexican star matures into the middleweight division.

Your claim that Golovkin "has spent eight years" beating "guys who are not challenges" rings hollow to me. First of all, you can't blame K2 for Golovkin's last eight years. His first fight on a K2 card was in December 2011; he didn't sign with the company until early 2012. It's been four years and counting with K2 and when he joined the company he was 22-0 and only three fights into his WBA title reign. What he did from that point on is what every other beltholder does – fight challengers rated in the Top 15

of the sanctioning organization that recognizes him as the "world champ." (Note: Seven of Golovkin's title defenses have come against RING-rated middleweights.) He's defended his WBA title 16 times and it wasn't a given that every challenger would "not be on his skill level." There were questions about his caliber when he stepped into the ring to face respected former two-time title challenger Matthew Macklin. A lot of fans forget that. I don't forget things like that. There were questions about his ability to take a shot from a world-class hitter when he faced Curtis Stevens. I haven't forgotten. I remember when Golovkin wasn't rated by THE RING and his climb up the magazine's middleweight Top 10. His place on pound-for-pound lists didn't happen overnight. Too many fans are looking at Golovkin's record and judging the level of his competition as though he's been a Top-5 pound-for-pound player for the past five or six years. Stop being silly.

And don't worry about Golovkin "being used to pushing guys around and not getting hit with authority." He hasn't walked through everyone he's faced. Stevens and David Lemieux both lasted into the eighth round and landed a few bombs (that would've hurt most middleweights) during their respective fights. Murray took Golovkin into the 11th round. Kassim Ouma went 10 hard rounds with him in a grueling fight.

But apart from Sergey Kovalev (and MAYBE Andre Ward) at LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT, who's going get in there and manhandle GGG? If and when Golovkin moves to 168 pounds, who's going to "punk" him? James DeGale? Badou Jack? Gilberto Ramirez? I don't see that happening.

THOMAS JACKSON, from Finland, says Golovkin and Kell Brook are sensational talents but adds: "fighting the bums of the month does them no favors," referring to the recent IBF mandatory challengers (Dominic Wade for Golovkin and Kevin Bizier for Brook) who were easily dispatched in two rounds by the defending titleholders. Says Jackson, "They should drop their IBF titles in the dumpster."

DOUGIE'S reply: While I agree that Wade and Bizier had no business being in the IBF's Top 10, let alone in the Top 5 or in mandatory challenger positions, I don't think it would be a good idea for Golovkin or Brook to vacate their IBF belts. There are three fighters on the planet who are bigger than the belts. Two are semi-retired. Golovkin is trying to get the third guy into the ring. Anyone who thinks the IBF title (or any of the other major sanctioning organization belts) is worthless needs to talk to Charles Martin. His IBF title was practically a lottery ticket. Without that belt, would Martin ever be paid as much as he made against Anthony Joshua? You know the answer. Think about that. If Golovkin didn't have the WBC's "interim belt," there wouldn't be all this public pressure on Canelo to fight him. Think about that.

JUAN VALVERDE, from Tijuana, Mexico, asks who Roman Gonzalez might fight next and whether Fischer can envision the RING/WBC flyweight champ headlining a show. Valverde doesn't see it happening.

DOUGIE's reply: I think K2 Promotions (which co-promotes "Chocolatito" with Teiken) will push for a rematch with WBO/WBA flyweight titleholder Juan Francisco Estrada, a fight HBO will get behind. It's also a fight that I believe is worthy of main event status and I think it would sell out the 8,000-seat StubHub Center in Carson, California. I think a fight with unbeaten WBC 115-pound titleholder Carlos Cuadras (35-0-1, 27 knockouts) could also be a main event at StubHub (and definitely in Mexico). THE RING's No. 1-rated junior bantamweight, Naoya Inoue, can be a main event dance partner in the U.S. if the Japanese sensation fights once or twice here and gets the HBO hype machine behind him.

By Mitch Abramson

Bakhtiyar Eyubov has stopped all 10 of his opponents.

POWERFUL MOTIVATION

HARD-PUNCHING **BAKHTIYAR EYUBOV** DOESN'T WANT TO RETURN TO LEAN BEGINNINGS

If Bakhtiyar Eyubov ever fulfills his considerable promise as a fearsome puncher, he will have a harrowing story to tell, full of catnaps in German train stations and thoughts of retirement in his native Kazakhstan.

But observing Eyubov's celebration following his brutal third-round knockout of journeyman Jared Robinson on Showtime's "ShoBox" in January, it's easy to forget the years of irrelevance and frustration he faced. In that cathartic moment, when Eyubov (10-0, 10 KOs) strutted around the ring in Tucson, Arizona, he seemed to have finally arrived – even if few can pronounce name (BAK-tia EW-bov).

"I just want to continue to get better and better," Eyubov said through translator Dmitriy Salita, the former 140-pound contender who now works as a promoter. "People always made fun of me in my neighborhood (in

Aktyubinsk, Kazakhstan). They called me a dreamer. Even though I walked away from the sport for a little bit, deep in my heart I always knew that my day would come."

That didn't always seem likely early in Eyubov's career. He says he had an amateur record of 170-20 but because he lacked financial support, he was never able to fight in international competitions. As a pro he bounced around, fighting in far-flung boxing outposts such as Woodlands and Galveston, in Texas, for promoters he says he had to beg for a place on their cards. He says that in 2014 he paid his own way to fight on two nondescript shows in Berlin and slept at a local train station because he couldn't afford a hotel.

"I had no real help to progress the way I should have," said Eyubov, who now lives in Brooklyn. "I had to pay for those trips. I felt unappreciated by the boxing powers-that-be. I had to do whatever I had to do to survive. I didn't really have any money and had to sleep wherever was available."

Following those experiences, without anyone backing his career, Eyubov returned to Kazakhstan to work as a personal trainer. He says he considered retiring as an active fighter. Through his contacts in the former Soviet Union, though, Salita, who is from Ukraine, learned of Eyubov's existence.

Salita liked the scouting report he was given. "He checked out," Salita says of Eyubov. "He had a lot of positives about him. I spoke to him and decided to work with him."

Salita signed Eyubov in March 2015 and tested him immediately by matching him with grizzled opponent Jason Thompson (5-11-4), who went the distance with Sadam Ali and drew with Frank Galarza and Boyd Melson. Eyubov crushed Thompson in just two rounds, raising a lot of eyebrows. Eyubov has fought four times since then, never going past the third round.

"I didn't know how good he was when he came here and I know Jason is a really good fighter," Salita said. "But Bakhtiyar just blew him out. And Jason hasn't fought since. I knew this guy was something special after that."

Eyubov has had limited experience as a pro – just 16 rounds in 10 fights. Perhaps that's a result of his fear of losing, which could mean going back to the days when he slept with the sounds of trains arriving in the background.

"I'm so afraid to lose that I can't control myself," he said. "I just want to get my opponent out of there so fast." RING

ESTHER LIN/SHOWTIME

THE ESSENTIALS
BAKHTIYAR EYUBOV

Age: 29

Weight class: Junior welterweight/ welterweight

Height: 5 feet 6 inches

Stance: Orthodox

Hometown: Aktyubinsk, Kazakhstan

Record: 10-0 (10 KOs)

Biggest strengths: Power in both hands » incredibly strong » throws tight punches » good inside fighter » good body-puncher » has aggressive, crowd-pleasing style.

Biggest question marks: Has yet to face an elite opponent or go the distance in his four-year career » Can he adjust to an opponent with the ability to avoid his power? » Will he maintain his composure?

IVAN BARANCHYK
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Baranchyk (10-0, 9 KOS) dazzled in his last performance, destroying previously undefeated Nicholas Givhan in just 21 seconds in a Showtime "ShoBox" fight. It was the baby-faced Russian native's sixth first-round knockout in less than two years as a pro. Baranchyk, promoted by Lou DiBella, took out Givhan with a lunging left hook that nearly sent his opponent through the ropes.

EDGAR VALERIO
FEATHERWEIGHT

Valerio (6-0, 4 KOs) is starting to create a little buzz for himself. He destroyed Javier Rodriguez on April 1, scoring a first-round knockout in his first fight under the Golden Boy Promotions banner. Valerio has fast hands and a diverse arsenal of punches. That includes an educated left hand, which the tall, rangy Los Angeles product uses to uncork accurate uppercuts and jabs.

MARIO BARRIOS
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

Barrios (15-0, 8 KOs) had a busy 2015, fighting seven times and stopping five of his opponents. That included Manuel Vides, whom he dispatched with an uppercut-left hook combination in the sixth round. The 20-year-old, who is advised by Al Haymon, has fast hands and is an aggressive boxer-puncher. He also poses matchup problems with his unusual size (6 feet tall) and skill-set.

 By Thomas Gerbasi

Pride Of Argentina

ERICA FARIAS IS ARGUABLY THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED ACTIVE FIGHTER FROM HER COUNTRY

Erica Farias is the role model she never had in Argentina.

When it comes to the machismo associated with boxing, it's hard to top Argentina. Marcos Maidana and Lucas Matthysse are only recent examples of rough-and-tumble battlers from that country willing to do whatever it takes to win.

So it may come as a surprise to some that arguably the most accomplished boxer on the current roster of fighters from Argentina is a woman, WBC junior welterweight champion Erica Anabella Farias.

"Boxing in Argentina has ceased to be a novelty and is very common here," said Farias, leader of a women's movement in her country that includes world champions past and present such as Yesica Yolanda Bopp, Edith Soledad Matthysse, Victoria Noelia Bustos, Anahi Esther Sanchez and Yesica Patricia Marcos.

The 31-year-old became a serious boxer by a fluke. She took up the sport only to lose weight in order to compete as a gymnast and planned to eventually go on to study law. Then she fell in love with boxing.

"My family was very surprised when they learned I wanted to be a boxer but after seeing my skills, they

accepted it," she said.

So did the powers that be on the amateur boxing scene in Argentina, although they didn't exactly give her an easy road once she started competing. Farias had been boxing for only a year when, in 2005, she found herself in the AIBA world championship tournament in India. She won three bouts before running into Katie Taylor of Ireland, who beat her by a score of 31-14.

"My amateur career was very quick. And with that came many challenges and great responsibilities, such as facing several fighters on the Argentina national team, earning a spot as a starter on the team and having to fight Katie Taylor," said Farias, who went a reported 18-2 as an amateur.

Taylor went on to win Olympic gold in 2012. By then, Farias was 14-0 as a pro and the WBC lightweight champion, with victories over former world titleholder Melissa Hernandez and 2016 International Women's Boxing Hall of Fame inductee Ann-Marie Saccurato. Farias' style, which features a steady punching attack and a willingness to brawl if necessary, was clearly better suited for the punch-for-pay ranks. Five more victories followed before her lone loss, a 2014 decision against Delfine Persoon.

"The defeat against Persoon made me grow more as a boxer and it's given me more strength to move forward, knowing that my defeat was a result of me not being prepared," said Farias, who cites Carlos Monzon, Muhammad Ali and Floyd Mayweather Jr. as the boxers she admires the most. "Of course, I would be more prepared in the rematch, leaving no doubt as to who is the best."

Moving up to 140 pounds after the loss, Farias picked up another world title with a 2014 win over Alejandra Marina Oliveras and successfully defended her crown with a decision over previously unbeaten Klara Svensson in THE RING's 2015 Fight of the Year.

It was a defining win for the 5-foot-4 Farias, who had some difficulties with the height and reach advantage of the 5-foot-9 Svensson in the early rounds. But after dropping the Swede in the fifth round, it was all Farias, who won a unanimous decision in Svensson's European backyard. That wasn't an issue for the Argentine star, who has wins in Denmark and Mexico, as well as her home country.

"It's not difficult as long as we are well paid and well received and respected as athletes," she said of fighting on the road. "These are experiences that help us to grow as boxers."

And while the Buenos Aires native sits atop the junior welterweight division, as her more celebrated countrymen did, she is also supremely ambitious. She's willing to face Persoon once more or move up to 147 for a superfght with pound-for-pound queen Cecilia Braekhus.

"In 2016, you will see Erica Farias demanding more competition anywhere in the world, giving me new opportunities where I can explore different horizons," she said.

In the process, expect her to be giving the young ladies of Argentina a new role model to look up to, something she didn't have when she first put on the gloves. But it's a new world now for Argentine boxing, which is just fine with "La Pantera."

"I feel really happy and enjoy being a role model for future boxers," she said. "That gives me a lot of satisfaction." RING

1. CECILIA BRAEKHUS
Norway • 28-0 (7 KOs)
Welterweight

2. DELFINE PERSOON
Belgium • 35-1 (16 KOs)
Lightweight

3. JELENA MRDJENOVICH
Canada • 36-10-1 (19 KOS)
Featherweight

4. JESSICA CHAVEZ
Mexico • 26-4-3 (4 KOs)
Flyweight

5. LAYLA MCCARTER
U.S. • 36-13-5 (8 KOs)
Lightweight

6. ERICA ANABELLA FARIAS
Argentina • 22-1 (10 KOs)
Junior welterweight

7. IBETH ZAMORA SILVA
Mexico • 24-5 (9 KOs)
Junior flyweight

8. ALICIA ASHLEY
U.S. • 23-10-1 (4 KOS)
Junior featherweight

9. ZULINA MUNOZ
MEXICO • 46-1-2 (27 KOS)
Junior bantamweight

10. AMANDA SERRANO
U.S. • 27-1-1 (20 KOS)
Featherweight

Jackie Nava was removed from the Top 10 because of inactivity. Nava is currently serving as the Federal Deputy of Tijuana and her fighting future is unclear.

ALSO: Canada's Jelena Mrdjenovich outpointed Argentina's Edith Soledad Matthysse to regain her WBA and WBC featherweight titles on March 11 in her hometown of Edmonton. Matthysse had stunned Mrdjenovich in August of 2015 to take the 126-pound belts. … Veteran Layla McCarter scored her first "official" win since November 2014, a 42-second knockout of Yolanda Segura on April 16 in Mexico. … Heather Hardy and Shelly Vincent moved a step closer to their East Coast grudge match with victories over Anna Donatella Hultin and Elizabeth Anderson, respectively, on April 16. Their promoter, Lou DiBella, is likely going to hold off until he can get it televised nationally. … New Zealand celebrated women's boxing in April with a card on which Ronica Jeffrey, Melissa St. Vil, Kali Reis, Michelle Preston and Mia St. John all emerged victorious. … At press time, Claressa Shields and Mikaela Mayer had stamped their tickets for Rio, qualifying for the 2016 Olympics as members of Team USA. Virginia Fuchs had one more chance to qualify at the Women's World Championships in May.

Anthony Joshua put an overmatched Charles Martin down twice in their short fight.

RINGSIDE REPORTS

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

ANTHONY JOSHUA KO 2 CHARLES MARTIN

Date: April 9
Site: O2 Arena, London
Division: Heavyweight
Weights: Joshua 244 pounds, Martin 245
RING ratings (before fight): Joshua No. 8, Martin No. 9
Network: Sky Sports Box Office (PPV), Showtime

Add Anthony Joshua to a growing collection of evidence that the heavyweights, forgettable for at least a generation, are not endangered.

Joshua is the latest and perhaps best sign of resilience in a division that had begun to look as if it was vanishing like an ancient flagship beneath the tides of history.

But Joshua, Tyson Fury, Deontay Wilder and a few others are beginning to change the perception, if not reality, of a division suddenly generating interest instead of echoes.

That interest could be heard in a capacity crowd at the O2 Arena for Joshua's swift stoppage of Charles Martin for the IBF title.

Promoter Eddie Hearn said priority tickets sold out within 90 seconds in February. There was no word on how many of those tickets were available. But only the final number mattered. At the opening bell, there were no empty seats.

Two weeks after the bout, there was still no pay-per-view number from Sky Sports. But a groundswell in Joshua's popularity has been evident for a while. It was there when he won gold at the London Olympics. It continued with a December victory over Dillian Whyte, a PPV bout that Hearn said did 450,000 buys. That number – not Martin -- explains why Showtime carried the April bout in the U.S.

In strict boxing terms, it's still hard to judge Joshua's second-round demolition of Martin, who played the role of beltholder in definitive style.

Martin (23-1-1, 21 knockouts) cashed the belt in like a lotto ticket and then promptly delivered it to Joshua (16-0, 16 KOs), who knocked him down with a right early in the second and finished him with another right at 1:32 of the round.

Martin was there but not because he represented a threat. The St. Louis fighter merely possessed a glossy symbol that Joshua needed as an affirmation of his potential.

Joshua himself seemed to know that.

"I ain't gonna get too carried away," he said as a shower of celebratory confetti fell onto him amid a roar of approval from 20,000 fans.

Joshua's comment acknowledged that bigger challenges and criticism await him. With confetti still in the air, the U.K.'s other heavyweight champ, Fury, began to trash-talk Joshua during a news conference.

"I thought he looked like a pumped-up weightlifter out of his mind on drugs," said Fury, who faces a July 9 rematch of his November stunner over Wladimir Klitschko. "He fought an American who had come to lay down with about as much fight in him as that glass of water. Zero."

Fury, who could counter Donald Trump – insult for insult – on any stage, has already grabbed the bad-boy role in what looms as a huge U.K. showdown.

First, however, Joshua, the perceived good guy with a quick smile and easy manner, is scheduled for his first title defense on June 25 against American Dominic Breazeale. Then Fury has to deal with a Klitschko likely armed with motivation he hasn't had in years.

If both prevail and fight each other, it'll be safe to say that the heavyweights are back.

WORLDWIDE RESULTS— Go to: bit.ly/worldwide-results or scan the QR code to see weekly fight results at RingTV.com.

ANDRE WARD UD 12 SULLIVAN BARRERA

March 26, Oakland (HBO)

Andre Ward's debut as a full-fledged light heavyweight was a bit like a test drive. It felt good and he got the result he needed.

The heavier weight looked like the right fit for the ex-168-pound champion. Short term, it works.

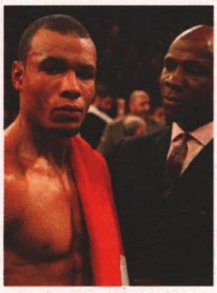
Long term, however, the new division is just a number, a milestone on the road to a bigger challenge against Sergey Kovalev in what could be a pound-for-pound showdown.

"I want to tighten things up," Ward (29-0, 15 KOs) said after scoring a third-round knockdown en route to a 117-109, 119-109, 117-108 decision over Sullivan Barrera.

According to CompuBox, Barrera (17-1, 12 KOs) landed 111 punches. He has neither Kovalev's accuracy nor power.

"Kovalev would destroy (Ward)," Barrera trainer Abel Sanchez, who formerly worked with Kovalev, said.

Ward answered with a question: "Who made him the voice of boxing?" But, he also said, his defense would get better. It'll have to.



NO. 8 CHRIS EUBANK JR. TKO 10 NICK BLACKWELL

March 26, London (Channel 5/U.K.)

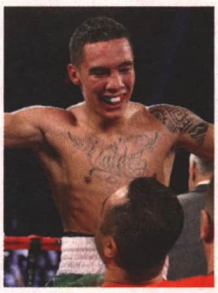
Nick Blackwell lost a bout but won a desperate fight for his life.

Blackwell was placed in a medically induced coma following a 10th-round TKO loss to Chris Eubank Jr. Nine days later, Blackwell woke up, never to box again, yet able to see his family. The last part was reason to celebrate but it was a reminder of boxing's dangers.

The middleweight bout ended 2:21 into the 10th but many believe it should have been stopped earlier as a declining Blackwell (19-4-1, 8 KOs) absorbed repeated blows from Eubank (22-1, 17 KOs). He suffered a brain bleed as a result.

On April 28, Nick's brother Dan – a 23-year-old middleweight with a record of 7-54 – announced his own retirement.

"The worry of me thinking, 'He could be dead,'" Dan told the U.K.'s Daily Mail. "It was how my family would be feeling. … I'm never going to box again."



OSCAR VALDEZ TKO 4 NO. 8 EVGENY GRADOVICH

April 9, Las Vegas (HBO)

There were a lot deserving faces for promoter Bob Arum's "No Trump Undercard" for the third Manny Pacquiao-Tim Bradley fight but none better than Oscar Valdez.

Valdez grew up in Tucson, Arizona, and began to box there. He moved to the Mexican border-town of Nogales and went on to represent Mexico in two Olympics. He speaks English like an American kid and Spanish like a Mexican kid.

With roots on both sides of the border, there's no Donald Trump wall big enough to separate the Mexican from the American in Valdez.

The best of both, fusion in one emerging featherweight, was evident in Valdez's dramatic fourth-round stoppage of Evgeny Gradovich.

Valdez (19-0, 17 KOs), now in line for a shot at Vasyl Lomachenko's vacated WBO title, threw the best left hand from a fighter with Arizona roots since Michael Carbajal, finishing Gradovich (21-2-1, 9 KOs) at 2:14 of the round.

NO. 4 GILBERTO RAMIREZ UD 12 NO. 1 ARTHUR ABRAHAM

April 9, Las Vegas (HBO)

History was Gilberto Ramirez's mission. Mission accomplished.

Ramirez became the first Mexican to win a super middleweight title with a shutout, 120-108 on all three scorecards, over Germany's Arthur Abraham for the WBO belt.

The lanky Ramirez (34-0, 24 KOs) capitalized on advantages in reach and height throughout 12 one-sided rounds against Abraham (44-5, 29 KOs), a longtime champ and a shopworn 36-year-old.

The question for Ramirez, who turns 25 on June 16, is whether he can become more than a historical footnote. The only Mexican to hold a title at a heavier weight is the late Julio Gonzalez, who won a 175-pound title in 2003 and lost it in his first defense in 2004.

With the victory, Ramirez emerged as an option for middleweight champ Gennady Golovkin if GGG doesn't get an immediate bout with Canelo Alvarez.

NO. 4 LEE SELBY UD 12 ERIC HUNTER

April 9, London (Sky Sports, Showtime)

Lee Selby, who traveled to the U.S. last October in a quest to become better known among American fans, got to know something about himself at home in the U.K.

Selby had never been knocked down.

He didn't know if he could get up.

He was.

He can.

Selby (23-1, 8 KOs) discovered resilience that carried him to a 116-110, 115-111, 116-110 decision over Eric Hunter (21-4, 11 KOs) in the second defense of a featherweight title he took from Evgeny Gradovich.

Hunter dropped him hard with a left in the second round. Dazed, Selby climbed to his feet and was staggered by another left, but made it out of the round and quickly recovered with rights in the third.

Selby lobbied for Carl Frampton or Leo Santa Cruz but they're fighting each other July 30 in New York. Instead, Selby figures to fight fellow U.K. featherweight Josh Warrington.

NO. 2 GARY RUSSELL JR. TKO 2 PATRICK HYLAND

April 16, Mashantucket, Conn. (Showtime)

Gary Russell Jr. cursed his dad. Then he thanked him. Turns out, father knows best.

At least Russell's dad knew what to do in getting his son ready for a dramatic second-round stoppage of Irish challenger Patrick Hyland.

"I got cursed out almost every day," Russell (27-1, 16 KOs) said after retaining his featherweight title. "I feel like I'm the worst fighter sometimes. But we're our worst critics. We pushed ourselves to the limit and that's why we got the victory."

A measure of Russell's dominance was summed up by one stat: Hyland (31-2, 15 KOs) had never been on the canvas; Russell put him down three times before the bout was stopped at 1:33 of the second.

Russell said afterward that he wants a rematch of his 2014 loss by majority decision to Vasyl Lomachenko.

NO. 7 JOSE PEDRAZA UD 12 STEPHEN SMITH

April 16, Mashantucket, Conn. (Showtime)

Jose Pedraza had a title. But there were doubts. Scratch the doubts.

Pedraza (22-0, 12 KOs) wiped them away like tarnish off brass with a 116-111, 117-110, 116-111 decision over U.K. junior lightweight Stephen Smith (23-2, 13 KOs) in the second defense of his IBF 130-pound belt.

In Pedraza's first defense, the Puerto Rican escaped with a controversial split decision over Edner Cherry. Only with a decisive victory over Smith could he silence the critics who argued Cherry got robbed.

He got it, first with a right hand that floored Smith in the ninth round and then with enough aggression and precise punching in the final three to clinch the win.

"I knew the right hand hurt him but I also knew he was a tough fighter so I had to be sure he didn't counterattack over the last three rounds," Pedraza said.

NO. 7 ERROL SPENCE TKO 5 CHRIS ALGIERI

April 16, Brooklyn, N.Y. (NBC)

Errol Spence calls himself The Truth. It's a nickname as simple as it is cocky and, for one night, it was no lie.

Spence made the hype surrounding him look real in doing what Manny Pacquiao and Amir Khan could not.

He stopped Chris Algieri.

A week after Pacquiao announced his retirement with a decision over Tim Bradley, Spence (20-0, 17 KOs) introduced himself as a welterweight threat to Kell Brook, Keith Thurman and Shawn Porter.

The clever Algieri (21-3, 8 KOs) never had a chance against Spence, who knocked him down three times with a left hand that finished the bout at 48 seconds of the fifth round.

"Floyd Mayweather ain't coming out of retirement to fight him," promoter Lou DiBella said.

Spence would settle for a shot at Brook but first might have to fight Konstantin Ponomarev in an IBF eliminator.

NO. 1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN KO 2 DOMINIC WADE

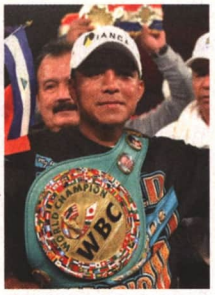
April 23, Inglewood, Calif. (HBO)

Gennady Golovkin waits the way he fights. Efficiently, almost flawlessly.

With business about Canelo Alvarez still uncertain, the businessman and fighter bearing the GGG trademark rolled along, securing an endorsement with Nike's Jordan Brand, a 22nd successive stoppage, a 16th title defense and the highest KO percentage (91.4) in middleweight history.

"Muchas gracias," the Kazakhstani said to a crowd that jammed The Forum to see a fighter who is winning over Mexican fans in the singular style that once defined the Showtime Lakers on that same floor three decades ago.

Poor Dominic Wade (18-1, 12 KOs). He was just there, like a prop that allowed GGG to display his skill-set. Wade was down three times in a one-man show that Golovkin (35-0, 32 KOs) ended at 2:37 of the second round with a right hand as powerful as any in the business these days.



C ROMAN GONZALEZ UD 12 NO. 8 MCWILLIAMS ARROYO

April 23, Inglewood, Calif. (HBO)

Roman Gonzalez remains unbeaten and unchallenged as the best of the little guys with a victory that was thorough in every way other than a stoppage.

McWilliams Arroyo was too agile and too tough to let Gonzalez's punches finish him in a 119-109, 120-108, 119-109 decision.

It was one-sided yet it also snapped Gonzalez's KO streak at 10 on a card that featured middleweight Gennady Golovkin's 22nd straight stoppage. For GGG trainer Abel Sanchez, that was an opportunity to say GGG, instead of Gonzalez, belongs at the top of the pound-for-pound debate.

"It's obvious who No. 1 is," Sanchez said.

Maybe. But Gonzalez (45-0, 38 KOs) might have more say. At the opening bell for Arroyo (16-3, 14 KOs), the champ was at 126 for a 112-pound bout. One more flyweight bout, he said, before moving to 115 for a fourth title at a fourth weight.

MAY

MAY 21 – Erislandy Lara (No. 1) vs. Vanes Martirosyan (No. 7), junior middleweights (for Lara's WBA title), Las Vegas (Showtime). Also, Jermall Charlo (No. 5) vs. Austin Trout (No. 2), junior middleweights (for Charlo's IBF title), and Jermell Charlo (No. 4) vs. John Jackson, junior middleweights (for vacant WBC title).

MAY 21 – Deontay Wilder (No. 3) vs. Alexander Povetkin (No. 2), heavyweights (for Wilder's WBC title), Moscow. Also, Denis Lebedev (No. 2) vs. Victor Ramirez (No. 9), cruiserweights (for Lebedev's WBA and Ramirez's IBF titles).

MAY 21 – David Haye vs. Arnold Gjergjaj, heavyweights, London.

MAY 21 – Joseph Parker (No. 10) vs. Carlos Takam, heavyweights, Manukau City, New Zealand.

MAY 25 – Amnat Ruenroeng vs. Johnriel Casimero, flyweights (for Ruenroeng's IBF title), Beijing, China.

MAY 28 – Ricky Burns vs. Michele Di Rocco, junior welterweights (for the vacant WBA title), Glasgow, Scotland. Also, Tyrone Nurse vs. Willie Limond, junior welterweights.

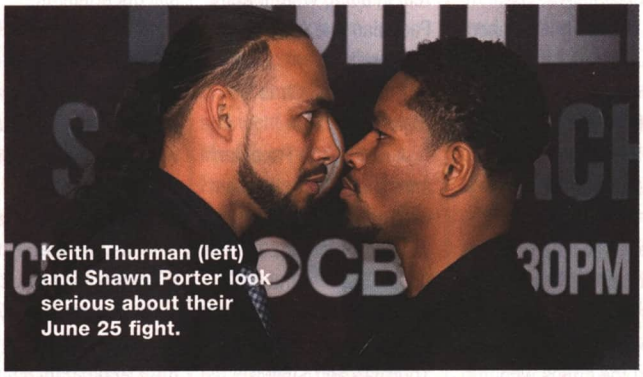
MAY 28 – Shane Mosley vs. David Avanesyan, welterweights, Glendale, Ariz. (CBS Sports Net)

MAY 29 – Tony Bellew vs. Ilunga Makabu (No. 5), cruiserweights (for vacant WBC title), Liverpool, England (Sky)

JUNE

ROCKY MARTINEZ VS. VASYL LOMACHENKO

Date: June 11
Location: Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York
Division: Junior lightweights (for Martinez's WBO title)
RING Ratings: Martinez No. 5; Lomachenko No. 1 featherweight
TV: HBO
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★★
Also fighting: Felix Verdejo (No. 10) vs. Juan Jose Martinez, lightweights
Significance: Lomachenko (5-1, 3 KOs) is shooting for a world title in a second division in only his seventh fight. The Ukrainian has won four straight since losing to Orlando Salido in his second fight. Martinez (29-2-3, 17 KOs) won his title by outpointing Salido in April of last year. They fought to a draw in the rematch, Martinez's last fight.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Lomachenko KO 7; Fischer – Lomachenko UD; Harty – Lomachenko KO 10; Abramson – Lomachenko KO 7


Keith Thurman (left) and Shawn Porter look serious about their June 25 fight.

KEITH THURMAN VS. SHAWN PORTER

Date: June 25
Location: Barclays Center, Brooklyn
Division: Welterweights (for Thurman's WBA title)
RING Ratings: Thurman No. 5; Porter No. 6
TV: CBS
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★★
Also fighting: Abner Mares (No. 5) vs. Jesus Cuellar (No. 7), featherweights.
Significance: Thurman (26-0, 22 KOs) has performed consistently well but has yet to record a breakthrough victory. This could be it. Porter (26-1-1, 16 KOs) is coming off an impressive decision victory over Adrien Broner in June of last year. The fight was scheduled for March 12 but was postponed after Thurman was injured in a car accident.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Thurman UD; Fischer – Thurman MD; Harty – Porter SD; Abramson – Thurman UD

JUNE 3 – Rances Barthelemy (No. 7) vs. Mickey Bey, lightweights (for Barthelemy's IBF title), Hollywood, Fla. (Spike)

JUNE 4 – Francisco Vargas (No. 2) vs. Orlando Salido (No. 4), junior lightweights (for Vargas' WBC title), Carson, Calif. (HBO).

JUNE 4 – Artur Beterbiev (No. 9) vs. Ezequiel Osvaldo Maderna, light heavyweights, Montreal (ESPN).

JUNE 11 – Ruslan Provodnikov (No. 3) vs. John Molina, junior welterweights, Verona, N.Y. (Showtime). Also, Demetrius Andrade (No. 6) vs. Willie Nelson, junior middleweights, and Dejan Zlaticanin (No. 2) vs. Emiliano Marsili, lightweights.

JUNE 17 – Pungluang Sor Singyu (No. 8) vs. Marlon Tapales (No. 9), bantamweights (for Sor Singyu's WBO title), Thailand.

JUNE 18 – Juan Carlos Payano (No. 2) vs. Rau'shee Warren, bantamweights (for Payano's WBA title), Chicago (NBC)

JUNE 25 – Anthony Joshua (No. 6) vs. Dominic Breazeale, heavyweights (for Joshua's IBF title), London. Also, George Groves (No. 5) vs. Martin Murray, super middleweights.

JULY

TYSON FURY VS. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

Date: July 9
Location: Manchester Arena, Manchester, England
Division: Heavyweights (for Fury's RING, WBA and WBO titles)
RING Ratings: Fury C; Klitschko No. 1
TV: HBO
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Significance: Fury (25-0, 18 KOs) turned the division upside down and became the recognized champ by executing a good game plan flawlessly to defeat Klitschko by a unanimous decision, the Ukrainian's first loss since 2004. Can he do it again? Klitschko (64-4, 53 KOs) will know what to expect this time and presumably will try to adjust but he turned 40 in March.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Fury UD; Fischer – Klitschko UD; Harty – draw; Abramson – Klitschko UD

JULY 11 – Sergey Kovalev (No. 1) vs. Issac Chilemba (No. 7), light heavyweights (for Kovalev's IBF, WBA and WBO titles), Ekaterinburg, Russia.

JULY 23 – Viktor Postol (No. 1) vs. Terence Crawford (No. 2), junior welterweights (for vacant RING championship, Postol's WBC and Crawford's WBO titles), Las Vegas, (HBO Pay-Per-View).

JULY 30 – Leo Santa Cruz (No. 3) vs. Carl Frampton (No. 2 jr. featherweight), featherweights (for Santa Cruz's WBA title), Brooklyn, N.Y.

NOTE: the numbers in parentheses are the fighters' RING ratings at the time this issue went to press.

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SIGN OF THE TIMES

Jack Dempsey (second from left) was about to change his life in this photo. The "Manassa Mauler" was an absolute terror at this time – Feb. 11, 1919 – having scored 12 first-round knockouts since the beginning of 1918. That earned him a shot at heavyweight champion Jess Willard, who had taken the title from the great Jack Johnson in 1915 and successfully defended once.

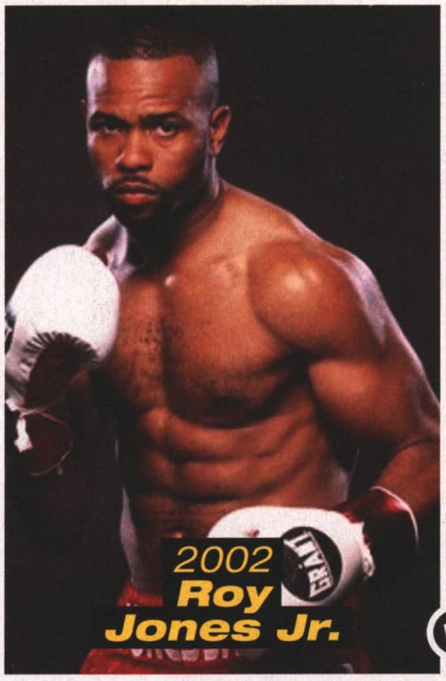
In this photo, Dempsey was about to sign the contract to fight Willard as (left to right) colorful manager Jack Kearns, legendary promoter Tex Rickard and public relations man Ike Dorgan (who also was co-founder of THE RING Magazine) looked on. Dempsey made the most of the opportunity in a classic fight. He put the 6-foot-6½ Willard down seven times in the first round en route to a brutal third-round knockout that left Willard a bloody mess and Dempsey the king of the boxing world. Dempsey became a huge figure thereafter, on par with other athletic icons such as Babe Ruth and Red Grange. He made public appearances across the nation, took part in exhibitions and went Hollywood, appearing in movies and marrying star Estelle Taylor. Dempsey won two more historic fights – stopping Georges Carpentier in 1921 and Luis Angel Firpo in 1923 – and then went three years without fighting. That opened the door for a hungry heavyweight named Gene Tunney, who outpointed Dempsey in the "Long Count" fight in 1926 and did it again the following year. Dempsey never fought again.

 By Lamar Clark

FOR BOXING AFICIONADOS ONLY

OLD SCHOOL vs. NEW SCHOOL

WHO WINS? ★ VOTE ON INSTAGRAM @RINGTV ★ #ATTHEFIGHTS

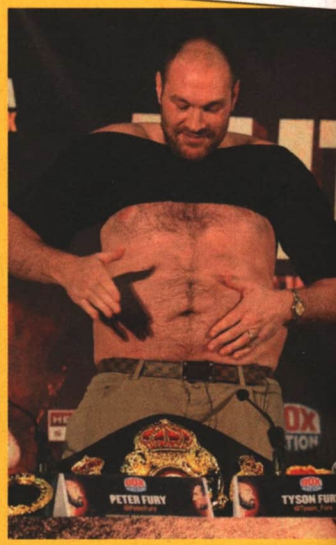


VS.

TALE OF THE TAPE ★ LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

JAN. 16, 1969	BORN	APRIL 2, 1983
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA	BIRTHPLACE	KOPEYSK, RUSSIA
NONE	ALIAS	"KRUSHER"
ORTHODOX	STANCE	ORTHODOX
63-9-0 (46 KOs)	CAREER RECORD	29-0-1 (26 KOs)
64 PERCENT	KO RATE	87 PERCENT
74 INCHES	REACH	72 ½ INCHES

STYLES MAKE FIGHTS



At top, left to right (excluding the unidentified man at the back), fans Matt Badamo, Pete Lasalla, Clem Jaskot, Steve Gunn and Robin Crawford show Bernard Hopkins love. Above, Tyson Fury suggested at a recent press conference that Wladimir Klitschko should be ashamed he lost to a fat man.

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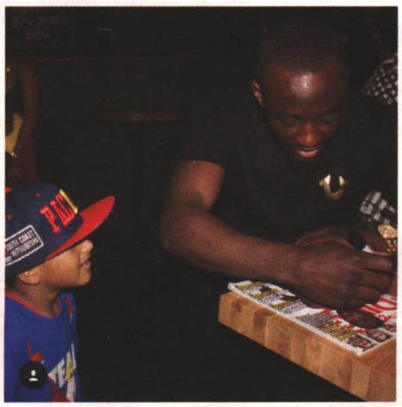

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